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ABSTRACT

This world history equity module was developed as a teacher training resource for use by Alaska local school districts. The manual is divided to facilitate the development of district professional development activities as well as to provide specific examples for inclusion of women in the curriculum. Alaska has one of the strongest state sex discrimination laws in the United States. This manual is an attempt to aid school districts in meeting the requirement for sex equity training and increasing awareness of sex bias. A training workshop agenda would focus on the following: (1) Introductions; (2) Women's World, Men's World; (3) Thirty-nine Guests at The Dinner Table; (4) Sharing Ideas for Women's World History; and (5) Closure: Does it Matter That We Don't Teach Women's History? Biographies of 39 notable women and activities are included for this 3-hour workshop. (EH)

Equity in World History

A TRAINING MODULE

Developed by

Alaska Department of Education
Office of Basic Education

Funded by

Title IV Sex Desegregation
Technical Assistance Grant

Equity in education

THE ALASKA PROJECT

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This World History Equity Module was developed by the Alaska Department of Education as a teacher training resource for use by local school districts. Gratitude is expressed to those who created and contributed to the development of this module.

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Linda Allen and Libby Roderick
for the use of their songs and tapes

Judy Chicago
and other authors
whose work we have used

Sue Remick
Graphic Artist
Kraft Design

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Alaska Department of Education

"If at times I seem to be able to see farther than others,
it is because I stand upon
the shoulders of giants."

— Anonymous

April, 1990

INTRODUCTION TO THE MODULE SERIES

Alaska's sex equity law, which prohibits sex discrimination in public school education, was passed by the Alaska Legislature in 1981. The law has been cited as one of the strongest state sex discrimination laws in the nation. This is in part due to the fact that the regulations require school districts to establish written procedures:

1. For the biennial training of certificated personnel in the recognition of sex bias in instructional materials and in instructional techniques which may be used to overcome the effects of sex bias;

2. For the biennial training of guidance and counseling staff in the recognition of bias in counseling materials and in techniques which may be used to overcome the effects of sex bias;

3. For the review of textbooks and instructional materials for evidence of sex bias; and

4. For the replacement or supplementation of materials found to exhibit bias.

Since the implementation of these regulations, referred to as Chapter 18, many school districts have relied on the Department of Education to provide them with on-site inservice training in the area of sex discrimination. Recognizing that local school districts need their own cadre of equity trainers as well as materials, the Department of Education utilized Title IV funds for the development of a series of equity modules. Between 1986 and 1988, educators within Alaska have developed eight modules, relating directly to curriculum content areas, that are now available to all Alaskan school districts. The modules were developed and written in such a fashion that district personnel with a minimal amount of experience could conduct an equity inservice.

Modules which have been completed include:

Women in American History (Elementary)	Computer Equity (K-12)
Women in American History (Secondary)	Foreign Languages
Language Bias (K-12)	Fine Arts (Elementary)
Science (Elementary)	Mathematics (Elementary)
Physical Education (Secondary)	Health (Elementary)
Women in Literature (Secondary)	

The Department is continuing the development of modules in other curriculum areas, most notably World History and Geography.

The Department of Education is committed to helping school districts comply with the regulations outlined in Chapter 18 and welcomes suggestions and ideas relating to equity issues in the classroom, the school and at the district level.

School district personnel using the modules are requested to complete the evaluation sheet at the end of this module and return it to the Department of Education. This information will be used to update and improve the modules.

WOMEN'S WORLD HISTORY: OVERALL DESIGN AND PURPOSE FOR THE SESSION

PURPOSE

1. To inspire Alaskan teachers to include women in their teaching of world history.
2. To provide teachers with information and resources that can help them teach about women in world history.
3. To offer an arena where teachers can share their good teaching ideas and strategies.

AGENDA

Time	Activity
30 minutes	Introductions
20 minutes	Women's World, Men's World
50 minutes	Thirty-nine Guests at *The Dinner Table*
10 minutes	Break
40 minutes	Share Your Ideas for Women's History
30 minutes	Closure: Does It Matter That We Don't Teach Women's History?
180 minutes	

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PLANNING YOUR TIME

The only way these activities can be compressed into a 3 hour workshop is to keep things moving briskly. The times indicated for the workshop activities are suggested times, but each workshop trainer will want to review the activities and revise the schedule to fit her or his style, the participants' needs, and local schedules.

MATERIALS TO GATHER BEFORE THE WORKSHOP

1. If there's no chalkboard, have butcher paper posted on the wall.
2. Marking pens, if using butcher paper. Chalk, if using chalkboard.
3. Duplicate the APPENDICES, one per participant. These are handouts.
4. Cassette player.
5. Cassette tape of women's history songs, "Here's to the Women," "Inspire Me," and "Rosa." (This is obtained from Equity Coordinator, Alaska Department of Education, Box F, Juneau, AK 99811, 907-465-2888.)
6. Paper plates, one for each participant. (Chinet brand works well).
7. Glue, crayons or colored marking pens (several sets for participants to share during the workshop); perhaps also such things as fabric scraps, felt, buttons, pipecleaners, yarn.
8. Typing paper.
9. Resource books from school or local library, such as *Sisterhood Is Global, Women's Atlas of the World,* etc. (See Appendix.)
10. Teachers should bring history books from own school.

WOMEN'S WORLD HISTORY WORKSHOP

PURPOSE:	To help participants know each other, and to help participants feel comfortable in group discussions.
GROUP SIZE:	All participants
TIME REQUIRED:	30 minutes
MATERIALS:	None
PROCEDURE:	Read script, which includes activity

INTRODUCTIONS:

"Long ago, before the civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt, cultures existed on the Anatolian peninsula, now Turkey, and in Old Europe, now Yugoslavia, that were matriarchal. Vestiges of these cultures were known at the time of the historian Herodotus, 5th century A.D. 'Ask a Lycean who he is,' said Herodotus, 'and he will tell you who his mother and his mother's mother is.' People who work with the Yup'ik say, 'That's also how the Eskimos do it.' Tlingits sometime say the same.

"That is how we will do our introductions today. As we go around the room, each person take one minute to tell your mother's name, your maternal grandmother's name, and something significant about each. I will start. " (Don't take more than 30 minutes for this activity. If there is a large group, divide them into smaller groups for the introductions.) The trainer may ask these questions when finished:

"What did you learn? "
"How did you feel while doing this activity?"

Additional information: The words we use to describe relationships may shed some light on the history of early families. Agnatic uncles or cousins or grandparents are those of the father. Agnatic meant "outside the tribe." Cognatic, or maternal relationships, meant "with the tribe." A mother's sister or brother, for instance, was considered of closer relationship than a father's sister or brother. That's why matriarchal tribes, such as the Tlingits, wanted the mother's brother to teach a boy how to act in ways acceptable to the group.

WOMEN'S WORLDS, MEN'S WORLDS

PURPOSE:	Participants will compare women's history with men's history to see why women are not included, and to discover the need to redefine history.
GROUP SIZE:	Large group
TIME REQUIRED:	20 minutes
MATERIALS:	Cassette player, Women's History Songs tape, paper, pen
PROCEDURE:	Read script, which includes activites.

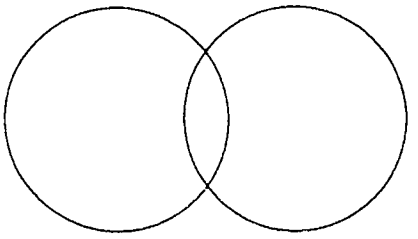
There are many reasons why today women are not included in history books. A major reason is that men write the books and they write about the things they consider important, which are the things they do. Linda Allen, from Bellingham, Washington, worked on the Washington Women's History Project and wrote a song about some of the differences in men's worlds and women's worlds. Before I play it for you, label a piece of paper, *WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO HISTORY*. As you listen to the song, jot down the contributions the singer mentions and contributions that enter your mind independently of the song.

Play "Here's To The Women," by Linda Allen. (Lyrics in Appendix. If for some unavoidable reason you do not have the cassette, read the lyrics to the song aloud.)

(This song is from Linda's album, MAMA WANTED TO BE A RAINBOW DANCER, available from Rainbow Dancer Productions, PO Box 5881, Bellingham, WA 98227, or from your local or regional women's bookstore).

After listening to the song, the trainer draws this diagram on the chalkboard.

WOMEN'S WORLD MEN'S WORLD



"A sociologist might draw men's world and women's world overlapping, like the circles in this diagram."

"From your lists you made as you listened to the song, what would you put on the side that says WOMEN'S WORLD? From what you know and have read about women's lives, what else would you include?

"From the history courses you've taken and the history books you've read, what topics are included in MEN'S WORLD?

"The overlapping area in the middle might be what historian Gerda Lerner calls "contributory women's history." There we can put most of the women you learned about in history who were remembered because they contributed to the MEN'S WORLD. Who are some of those women? " (Brainstorm names. Participants will probably list Betsy Ross, Clara Barton, Molly Pitcher, Florence Nightingale.)

"Could these women be considered heroes?"
"Why? Or why not?"
"What is a hero?"

Until we revise our notions about what are the important things to remember about people's lives and history, we may never have many women appearing in the history books.

Another reason why many women's names have not appeared in history books is because matriarchies have tended to be group oriented instead of individual oriented. At Catal Huyuk, (pronounced 'ChuhTAL hooYOOK') the most famous "dig" on the Anatolian Peninsula, for instance, at first archeologists thought the societies were leaderless, as there were no "chieftain graves" with great riches gathered around the bones. Wealth was shared equally. This was true on the isle of Crete, also believed to be matriarchal. There, technological advances such as plumbing and paved roads gave everyone a standard of living that probably was not equalled in modern cultures till the late 19th Century. They did not have the habit of celebrating heroes, which is essentially a hierarchal practice. Therefore, almost no heroes were remembered from those places. They were also peaceful, with no weapons of war found in the digs during thousand year periods. The rise of hero worship seemed to come with the advent of wars and the celebration of wars.

THE THIRTY NINE GUESTS AT THE DINNER TABLE

PURPOSE: Participants will learn some famous historical women and view the grand sweep of women's contributions.

GROUP SIZE: Individual, small group

TIME REQUIRED: 50 minutes

MATERIALS:
Butcher paper
8 1/2x 11 paper per person
A poster of the Dinner Party table
Handout 7 to each, 39 separate biographies(1 to each)
Chart of 39 names written large
Typing paper
Paper plates(one per person)
Colored crayons or markers
Glue
Miscellaneous items: fabric scraps, felt, buttons, pipe cleaners, yarn

PROCEDURE: Read script , which includes activities.

Because we live in a heirarchal age that considers some people "greater" than others, it would be worthwhile if you could leave this workshop knowing who some of the so-called "great" women of history have been. How many do we know now? Each of you make a list of 10 great women of world history. Try not to use the same ones we have mentioned in earlier parts of the workshop.

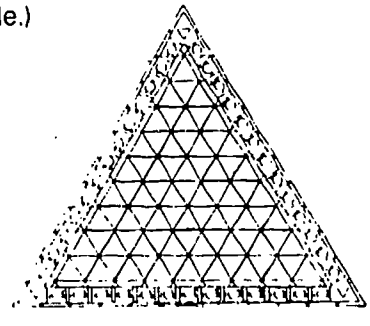
Allow a few minutes for this. Ask:

"Was that hard?" "Why was it hard?"

Ask participants to get into groups of 3 or 4 and share their lists, compiling them into a group list, writing large on butcher paper. Display these lists at the front of the room and talk about them.

Now we will put your lists aside and look at some names compiled by American artist Judy Chicago and a team of researchers in the mid-1970's for her art production called *THE DINNER PARTY.* The book by the same name that describes the process they used for this creation has biographies of these 39 women plus 999 more. Today we will only deal with the 39 the team finally selected to set plates for at the table. This is what the table looked like:

(Not heirarchal. A 3-sided table.)



Discuss with participants:

"Why 39 guests? Any ideas? " (13 x 3).

"Why 13?" (Thirteen months in the lunar calendar, the first calendar, marking women's menstrual cycles. That's why the patriarchy discredited the number 13, made it the witches' number, because women's power to bleed and not die or keep their blood when pregnant and make life was a power greatly feared by early men. Older women who had experienced menopause were especially feared because it was believed that the power of their blood was still within them.)

"Why3? " (The original trinity—woman the virgin, mother, crone. The 3 passages of life.)

Have the names of Chicago's 39 Guests at the Dinner Table on separate slips of paper. Each participant will draw the name of one dinner guest. (Biographies are in the Appendix.) You might want to write the names large at the top of a page of typing paper to illustrate how large you want them to write their summaries. In that case, participants can select one page instead of drawing a name from slips of paper.

"Here are the 39 women and their contributions as Judy Chicago described them." (Hand out the biographies.) You might want to write the names large at the top of a page of typing paper to illustrate how large you want them to write their summaries. " Here is a piece of typing paper and a paper plate for each of you. Read the information about the woman whose name you drew. Using symbols, design a plate for her. There are colors on the table which you may use. (Or any other art materials on hand. Then, on the piece of typing paper, summarize the woman's major contributions to our global society in large print, so it can be posted on the wall for all to see."

Allow 10 minutes for each participant to read the biography and summarize it.

Allow at least 15 minutes to translate it into symbols on the plate. It is necessary to hurry them along if you have a limited amount of time, since this activity could take hours.

After all are finished, call on participants, perhaps in chronological order, to tell about individual women. Before they speak, they could post their plate and written summary on the wall, creating a visual time line.

If there are fewer than 39 people in the workshop, do not worry that all the names are not drawn. Each participant will take home the biographies of all and can read about them at her or his convenience. If there are too many participants and not enough time, you may again let each summarize in small groups the life of the great woman chosen by the group.

Discuss: "What did you learn?"
"Did you enjoy learning about the great women?"
"Do you know more about great women in world history than you once did?"
"Was it a learning experience to try to create a plate representative of the woman?"

(An extension idea if you use this activity in your own classroom might be to:
—design a menu.
—decide who you would like to have had as a table companion and why.)

TRAINER INSTRUCTION SHEET

SHARING IDEAS FOR TEACHING WOMEN'S WORLD HISTORY

PURPOSE:	Participants will exchange teaching ideas, learn additional strategies and about other materials.
GROUP SIZE:	Small groups, large group
TIME REQUIRED:	40 minutes
MATERIALS:	Handouts, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 Cassette player and tape of Women's History Song
PROCEDURE:	Read script, which includes activities.

Children learn more if they can engage both the left and right brains in the learning. Molly Murphy MacGregor, of the National Women's History Project, tells of a school in Santa Rosa where each student studies a woman over a period of time and actually becomes that woman for a Women's History Pageant, standing before the class (or school) and telling in the first person what she did.

Writing a song about a great woman can also be a creative learning experience.The Anchorage Education Association annually gives a $100 gift certificate from the Alaska Women's Bookstore for the best women's history song. Here is the 1989 winning entry, a song Libby Roderick wrote honoring black women she admires. It is called "Rosa Parks."

Play the song. (Words are in the Appendix.)

Discuss: "What other ideas for teaching Women's World History have you had?"

Have participants brainstorm materials and/or ideas they have had or used. Allow several minutes for sharing. Have resources to show, such as Robin Morgan's *Sisterhood is Global* (and *The Women of the World Atlas*, by Joni Seager and Ann Olson). (See book list in the Appendix for other ideas.)

These are especially useful for making Women's World History more than a history of women of western cultures. A page from *The Women in the World Atlas* is included as Handout 2, the page entitled "Poverty."

Have participants look at it. Read the introduction and look at the legend on the chart. Trainer asks questions as particpants look at the charts.

"Which group makes up most of the people in the US living under the poverty level?"
"In which countries are fewer than 10% of households headed by women?"
"In what countries are 10-20% of households headed by women?"
"In what countries are 21-30% of households headed by women?
"In what countries are 31% or more of households headed by women?"

"Can we assume that women in two-parent households are then better off than those in single-parent households?'
"Why?" Or, "Why not?"
(Consider Iran, where few women are educated and few allowed to work; there women are almost totally controlled by male family members. Divorce is prohibited for women, even when there is known brutality by the husband. In Denmark, on the other hand, literacy among men and women is

99%. Women earn 84% of what men earn in non-agricultural jobs. Social insurance covers all citizens, so the expense of raising children is less. Divorce is easy, so women are less likely to remain in unhappy marriages.)

The *Women in the World Atlas* is great for raising questions. Many of the answers (such as those above) can be found in *Sisterhood is Global.*

Supplemental Activities

Examine world history books in use in Alaskan and American high schools. What proportion of the pages are devoted to history which includes women? Take 5 minutes with a partner and look through a book. Take two key facts, such as the existence of matriarchies that pre-dated Mesopotamia and the European witchburnings (perhaps as many as nine million, according to Mary Daly), and see how these are treated in the history books. Discuss your findings.

If there is enough time alloted for this workshop, participants might be asked to survey the history books from their school to check them out to see if they give a fair representation of women's history as well as men's.

Use quotations that provoke thought and have students write opinion papers on them. *A Feminist Dictionary, The Quotable Woman,* and *Not in God's Image* are three good sources for provocative quotations. (See bibliography in Appendix. A number of quotations are reproduced in the Appendix for easy use.)

Ask participants for other good resources; they no doubt may have other good ideas.

Trainer says, "Here is another short excerpt from literature. "In the early nineteenth century," write Mary Jane Moffat and Charlotte Painter in *Revelations: Diaries of Women* (Vintage, 1974) "a seven year old Scottish girl wrote of the difficulties of achieving an ideal of feminine goodness even before she had learned to punctuate." Marjory Fleming kept a journal. In the 1850's it was published. Mark Twain loved it. Let me read you some of it, though you are denied the charm of its creative visual impact:

'I confess that I have been
more like a little young
Devil then a creature for
when Isabella went up
to stairs to teach me reli-
gion and my multi-
plication and to be good
and all my other lessons
I stamped with my feet
and threw my new hat
which she made on the
ground and was sulky an
was dreadfuly passionate
but she never whipped me
but gently said Marjory
go into another room and
think what a great crime
you are committing
letting your temper
get the better of you
but I went so sulkely that
the Devil got the better of me
but she never whip
me that I think I would
be the better of it and the
next time time that I behave
ill I think she should do it. . .

I am now going to tell you
about the horible and wret (ched)
plaege that my multiplication
give me you cant concieve it—
the most Devilish thing is 8 times 8
& 7 times 7 it is what nature itselfe
cant endure. . .

To Day I pronunced a
word which should never
come out of a ladys lips it was
that I called John a Impu-
dent Bitch and Isabella afterwards told
me that I should never say
it even in joke but she kindly
forgave me because I said
that I would not do it again. . .'"

Trainer asks, "Does the style remind you of any literature you've heard before?" (Yes, Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, sometimes called the first American novel, published 1884. Mark Twain loved the diary of Marjory Fleming. The influence of the 7-year-old girl's style on Mark Twain's depiction of Huck Finn's character seems clear. But little girls never know that, and what a difference it might make for some of them to know!)

In an age of heroes, females have a right to theirs, too. (The word 'hero' derives from 'Hera", formerly the Mother Goddess of ancient Greece before Zeus displaced her power. Yet for years, writers have used 'heroine', the weak form of the word, when they referred to women!)

Libby Roderick, Alaskan songwriter, spoke to this need in another of her songs, "Inspire Me." Play the song.

I hope we each can be inspired to offer all our students models of women heroes to give them more options of how they can be and what they can become.

CLOSURE

PURPOSE:	To identify literary selections demonstrating bias, with an emphasis on how insidious the bias is.
GROUP SIZE:	All participants
TIME REQUIRED:	30 minutes
MATERIALS:	Cassette player, Cassette tape with Libby Roderick's song "Inspire Me"
PROCEDURE:	Read script, which includes discussion activity.

Does it matter that we don't teach Women's History? Let me read you a story: (Trainer reads aloud this selection from *Sisterhood is Global,* the entry on Japan, by Kieko Higuchi.)

"Ms, J, was a sixth grade teacher in Odawara. She anticipated that this might be her last year of teaching, and she was expecially determined that her students would finish school both mentally and physically strong. Putting up a huge map of Japan, she said to the students, 'Let's run the equivalent of the distance to Kyushu—about a thousand kilomenters—during this year, every one of us!' At first the children were eager to run every day. But as time passed they became tired and began to lose interest. Undaunted, the fifty-year-old former physical education major inspired her students to persevere, she herself daily running at the head of the class. She worked hard to encourage and praise them, even calling the race a 'marathon.' In that year every one of her students succeeded in running the thousand kilomenters and through this 'marathon' learned the great joy of achieving a very difficult goal.

"One of the students, a little girl, wrote about her experience of the 'whole class marathon.' Her composition was published in a collection of schoolchildren's works and included as a student's composition in the most widely used reader for Japanese sixth-graders. When Ms. K. heard the news she was overjoyed. Her colleagues showered her with congratulations; even the local newspaper reported the event.

"When she got a sample copy of the textbook, she proudly and eagerly began reading her student's essay. But as she read, her joy turned into deep disappointment. She had been obliterated; a young male teacher was leading the class marathon. 'This is not me,' she thought to herself. 'Even if I insisted, no one would believe that this composition is about what I have accomplished in my class.' "

"In late 1979 I visited Odawara and met Ms. K. She told me her story. 'If it were a fiction,' she said, 'a man teacher would be all right. But it was me, a woman, who led the class in long distance running. None of the men teachers ever tried such a thing.'"

Discuss: "What happened?"

"Is it important?"

"Why or why not?"

"Do you think this is the first time such a thing has happened to women's accomplishments in history?"

(We know that Sophie Tolstoy played a large part in the writing of *War and Peace* and was rewarded with her husband and history calling her a shrew. And that William Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' borrowed from his sister Dorothy's journals. He won fame; she went mad.)

TRAINER'S MODULE EVALUATION

TRAINER NOTE: Now that you have completed the workshop, please take a moment to complete the following evaluation. Your input will be of vital importance as the modules are refined to meet the needs of teachers.

YOUR NAME: (optional) _____

NAME OF MODULE: _____

WHERE PRESENTED: _____

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: _____

I. Trainer Instruction Sheet

A. Were training instructions clear and precise? _____ YES _____ NO

If no, please state page number and problem area: _____

_____

Other comments: _____

_____

B. Was the format of the Trainer Instruction Sheets easy to follow?

_____ YES _____ NO

II. Participant Activities

A. Which activity did the participants appear to enjoy the most?

_____

B. Are there any activities that you feel need to be eliminated or replaced? If so, please identify.

_____

_____

C. Was the timing allocated for activities appropriate?

_____ YES _____ NO

D. Overall, do you feel this module raised the participants' awareness of sex bias?

_____ YES _____ NO

_____

Return to: Gender Equity Coordinator
Alaska Department of Education
P.O. Box F
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Anchorage School District Trainer substitute ASD evaluation form for this page.

WORKSHOP EVALUATION

I. How would you rate this workshop in the following areas? (Please circle the most appropriate rating.)

		Very clear				Not clear
A.	Objectives were made clear.	1	2	3	4	5
		To a great extent				Not met at all
B.	Objectives were met.	1	2	3	4	5
		Great value				No value
C.	Information was of practical value.	1	2	3	4	5
		Most relevant				Not relevant
D.	Handouts/materials were relevant to my present needs.	1	2	3	4	5
		Highly effective				Not effective
E.	Presentation was effective.	1	2	3	4	5

II. Circle one of the following ratings which best describes your feeling about this workshop in comparison to others you have attended?

1 One of the best 2 Better than most 3 About average

4 Weaker than most 5 One of the worst

What were the strongest features of the workshop? _____

_____

What were the weakest features of the workshop? _____

_____

Return to: Gender Equity Coordinator
Alaska Department of Education
P.O. Box F
Juneau, Alaska 99811

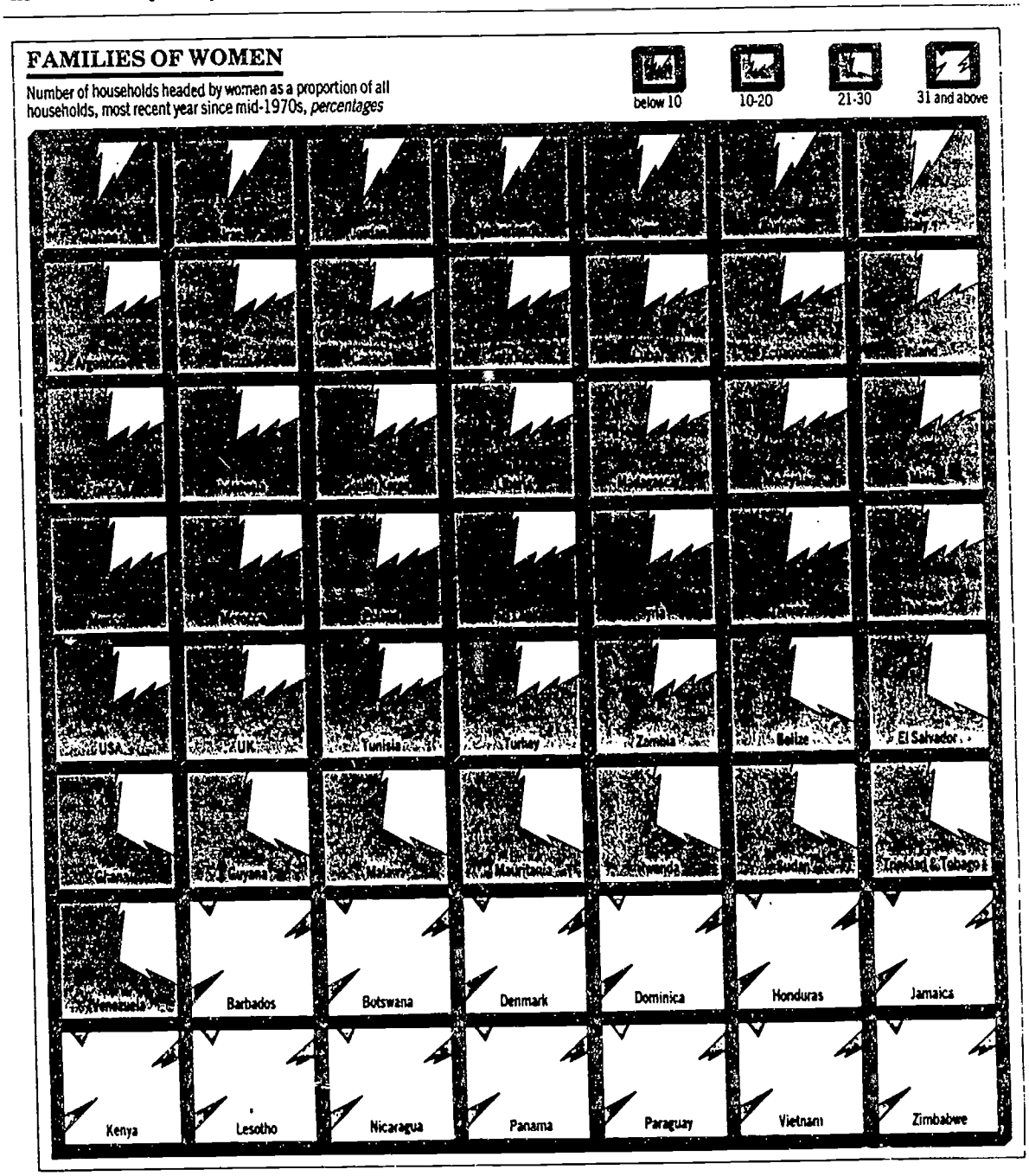
POVERTY 28

Women everywhere control fewer resources and reap a lesser share of the world's wealth than men; it follows from this that when women have to support families and themselves on their own, they end up poorer than men.

In the USA, 78 per cent of all people living in poverty are women or children under 18 years old. Statistics from all over the world tell the same story: no matter how poverty is measured, the poor population is largely and increasingly comprised of women and their dependent children. This is what is known as the feminization of poverty.

Worldwide, one-third of all households are now headed by women. Women outlive men and commonly spend some of their older years alone.

The poverty that is disproportionately borne by women, is especially borne by those with children and by older women.



SONGS:

HERE'S TO THE WOMEN

History books give us historical facts
Of soldiers and sailors and men with their axes.
But who filled their bellies, and who washed their clothes?
Who raised up the children, who nurtured their souls?

Chorus: Without all the women, now, where would we be?
Working and caring throughout history?
Their hands on the plow but their stories untold.
So here's to the women who shouldered the load.

The wilderness held you in the palm of her hand.
It took more than muscle to settle this land.
Women together set straight to the task
With schools and libraries, a city at last!

Chorus

It's down at the factory, it's out on the line.
A woman is working from morning till night.
Her mind on her children, her hand on the frame.
If the kids get in trouble, it's she who is blamed.

Then it's back home again to do summer and chores,
Canning and mending and scrubbing the floors.
Scarce see the children before they're in bed.
Hard life to follow for beans and fried bread.

Chorus

In hard times and good times the women would share
Their songs and their stories, their loves and their fears;
And their history's recorded, the song never ends,
In the memory of mothers and sisters and friends.

ROSA PARKS

(Chorus)
Rosa, Rosa, called to me, sayin'
"Don't you take the back of no bus.
Every woman here deserves respect.
Ain't nothin' too good for us,
Sweet women, nothin' too good for us."

Nikki Giovanni, she tell it like it is.
She say, "Oooooooooooo,
When you're black like me,
You are queen of the world.
Ain't nothin' too rich for us,
Sweet women, nothin' too rich for us."

Barbara, Barbara Jordan,
Congresswoman of the US.
She said, "I never planned
To be run of the mill."
And neither should any of us!
Sweet women, neither should any of us!

Fannie, Fannie Lou Hamer, said,
"People deserve enough food;
And everybody
Got the right to vote
'Cause nobody better than you,
Sweet woman, nobody better than you."

Shirley Chisholm found her voice,
Said, "No other voices will do.
Women of color must
Speak for themselves.
Ain't nobody smarter than you,
Sweet women, nobody smarter than you."

Audre Lorde, surviving cancer,
Speaking so bold and so true.
She says, "With women's love
And your own true vision,
Ain't nothin' too scary for you,
Sweet women, nothin' too scary for you."

Alice, Alice Walker
Writing us all back home,
Saying, "Go in search
Of your mother's garden
And find yourself your own.
Sweet woman, find yourself your own."

Winnie Mandela, her fist held high,
She say, "My people are goin' to be free.
Racism tryin'
To make me die.
But ain't nothin' too bold for me,
Sweet woman, ain't nothin' too bold for me."

Women, if we are goin' to be free,
It's got to be all or none.
Where racism lives
We are all in chains.
Can't none of us make it alone,
Sweet women, can't none of us make it alone.

INSPIRE ME

Everybody needs someone to show them what is possible.
Everybody needs someone to go as far as she can see.
I need to stand upon the shoulders of giants.
I need a woman who's as big as me.

(Chorus)
Give me a woman who can climb the tallest mountain.
Give me a woman who can swm across the widest sea.
Women need women who lead lives of boldest daring.
Tell me their stories, they inspire me.

When I was a little bitty baby sitting on my mama's knee,
I looked around to see just what the future had in store for me.
I needed to see whome who were living without limits.
I needed to see women making history.

So I said: (Chorus)

Give me Amelia who went soaring across the ocean,
Winnie Mandela who is going to set her people free,
Judy Chicagho who breaks all artistic silences.
These women leave a precious legacy.

When I was a young teenager reading my Seventeen,
I looked around to see just what the future had in store for me.
Women in the fashion mags were too small for my dream.
I needed to see women just as big as me.

So I said: (Chorus)

I know of women all across the nations
Leading lives of courage in the face of fear and poverty.
One leaves an abusive home, one raises her five children.
Women, we need a new mythology.

So I say: (Chorus)

Now that I'm a grown up woman living in society,
I still look to see just what the future holds in store for me.
I still need women who are shooting like the comets
So I can leave my own starlight in this galaxy.

So I say: (Chorus)

SAMPLE QUOTATIONS FOR STIMULATING WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

"I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a dormat. . ." **(Rebecca West, 1913)**

"Until the lions have their historians, tales of hunting will always glorify the hunter." **(African proverb)**

"Man's discovery that his genitalia could serve as a weapon to generate fear must rank as one of the most important discoveries of prehistoric times, along with the use of fire and the first crude stone axe. From prehistoric times to the present, I believe, rape has played a critical function. It is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear." **(Susan Brown Miller)**

"Men have broad shoulders and narrow hips, and accordingly they possess intelligence. Women have narrow shoulders and broad hips. Women ought to stay home; the way they were created indicates this, for they have broad hips and a wide fundament to sit upon, keep house and bear children." **(Martin Luther, 1531)**

1468. The Pope defines witchcraft as crimen exceptum, removing all legal limit to torture.
1482. Leonardo da Vinci moves to Milan, and begins his notebooks on hydraulics, mechanics, anatomy; he paints 'Madonna of the Rocks.'
1523. One thousand witches burn in a single year in the diocese of Como.
1543. Copernicus publishes 'De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium.'
1572. Augustus the Pious issues 'Consultationes Saxionicae,' stating that a good witch must be burned because she has made a pact with the devil.
1585. Witch burnings in two villages leave one female inhabitant each.
1581-1591. Nine hundred burned in Lorraine.
1622. Francis Bacon publishes '*Natural and Experimental History the Foundation of Philosophy.*'
1622-1623. Johann George II, Prince Bishop, builds a house for the trying of witches at Bamberg, where 600 burn.
1628. One hundred fifty burned at Wurzburg.
1638. Galileo publishes 'Two New Sciences.'"

(Susan Griffin, in WOMAN AND NATURE)

"The overthrow of mother-right was the world historical defeat of the female sex. The man took command in the home also; the woman was degraded and reduced to servitude, she became the slave for his lust and a mere instrument for the production of children." **(Frederich Englels, 1884)**

THE THIRTY NINE GUESTS AT THE DINNER TABLE

(Selected by Judy Chicago for "The Dinner Party. Along with her brief biography, she talks about how she conceptualized the plate. Your symbols can be different, your own.)

1. Primordial Goddess
2. Fertile Goddess
3. Ishtar
4. Kali
5. Snake Goddess
6. Sophia
7. Amazon
8. Hatshepsut
9. Judith
10. Sappho
11. Aspasia
12. Boadaceia
13. Hypatia
14. Marcella
15. Saint Bridget
16. Theodora
17. Hrosvitha
18. Trotula
19. Eleanor of Aquitaine
20. Hildegarde of Bingen
21. Petronilla de Meath
22. Christine de Pisan
23. Isabella d'Este
24. Elizabeth R
25. Artemisia Gentileschi
26. Anna van Schurman
27. Anne Hutchinson
28. Sacajawea
29. Caroline Herschel
30. Mary Wollstonecraft
31. Sojourner Truth
32. Susan B. Anthony
33. Elizabeth Blackwell
34. Emily Dickinson
35. Ethel Smyth
36. Margaret Sanger
37. Natalie Barney
38. Virginia Woolf
39. Georgia O'Keeffe

PRIMORDIAL GODDESS

In almost all ancient religions, the feminine principle was seen as the fundamental cosmic force. This female creative energy is embodied in the first plate on the table, that of the Primordial Goddess, who symbolizes the original feminine being from whom all life emerged. She is the Primal Vagina—her center, dark and molten; all her energy emanates from her bloody womb and core. She is the Sacred Vessel, the gateway to existence and the doorway to the abyss. In the beginning, life and death were merged in her body as parts of the endless process of rejuvenation and decay.

There was a time when there was no distinction among this Primordial Goddess, the Earth, and Earth's daughter, Woman. All were one, part of the mysterious female universe. The human race, awed by this nameless force, watched plants grow from the body of the Earth and life spring from the body of Woman, and could only venerate this magical power possessed by the feminine spirit.

I painted this plate at an early point in the Project, when I was still working alone. The image is a relatively undeveloped butterfly form, the wings not yet evolved from the flesh/rock substance of which the Primordial Goddess is made. I originally named her Gaea, after the Greek goddess who embodied the idea of this universal female principle or Earth Mother, but changed the name when I realized that the image on the plate actually refers to a concept that existed before there were words. I looked at the earliest pictographs to see how this Primordial Goddess was represented. They were only primitive markings, holes in rocks, sacred stones. She was too immense to be easily conveyed; her enormous power could only be symbolized. I tried to imagine what it must have felt like to live under the stars with no houses or roads, no words for anything one saw—just succession of sights and sounds that were frightening and wonderful. I could easily understand making an association between the female body and the Earth; I make it now, between my flesh and that of an animal or soil or bark of a tree.

The Primordial Goddess rests on a coiled form, one of the earliest shapes fashioned by female hands. It is the basic shape of a pot and a basket, the objects which allowed our ancestors to store precious water and carry their possessions out of the cave and into the beginnings of civilization. Around teh plate are animal skins, stretched over the runner to remind us of the earliest forms of clothing, stitched down with cowry shells, the ancient symbol of women and the earliest form of money.

FERTILE GODDESS

From a generalized concept of the universe as an amorphous, feminine being with all living creatures merged into one life-force, distinctions began to arise. People were able to identify themselves as different from the animals, from the plants, and from the Earth itself. Faced with epidemics, famines, and the untamed forces of nature, their survival—and that of their children—was of utmost importance. Women were developing agriculture, pottery, and basket-making. From them emanated all that sustained life, and early peoples began to fashion images of these magical beings. The awe of the universe which once informed all human actions became centered in the awe of Woman herself, whose body was the symbol of birth and rebirth and the source of nourishment, protection, and warmth.

This "fertile woman" or "fertile goddess" has been discovered underneath the remains of civilizations everywhere on Earth. Called Venuses, the small, faceless figures usually have pendulous breasts, large bellies, and rounded buttocks. These little amulets were worshiped by women and men alike, and they were the basis of a Mother Goddess religion that was spread throughout the world by the migrations of people looking for more food, better climate, or a safer place to make their home.

These nameless Venuses, these crude feminine representations, and all they stand for, were the source for the image of the Fertile Goddess. The plate is done with thin washes of color fired on top of one another, and the forms are created with a hatched line called 'pen work.' In this technique, china-paint pigment, already mixed with oil, is thinned with a special pen oil and used in a crow-quill pen with a hard point. This pen-work method is quite different from the traditional pen-and-ink technique known to most artists. The pen is filled from the side, and the line is begun with a dot that is then pulled along until the ink runs out. It was necessary to unlearn all one's developed ability with a pen in order to do this kind of pen work.

The plate sits on a roughly woven and stitched runner reflecting the early stages of human civilization and the development of weaving and pottery by women. Small clay figurines adorn the runner—little Mother Goddesses that resemble the original effigies made by our ancestors many centuries ago. Several of us made them in the studio, looking at reproductions of those ancient fetishes and feeling connected across time with our foremothers. Following the techniques used by women for centuries, as we did this runner—making coils, carving amulets, choosing shells and starfish to embellish the woven surfaces— we felt connected to another time, performing acts that were routine to ancient women whose bodies were worshiped, not degraded, by the civilization they were helping to create.

ISHTAR

Ishtar, the Great Goddess, the giver and taker of life, was conceived by those who worshiped her as a being whose power was infinite. Revered for thousands of years in Mesopotamia, she expressed the power of the female principle as life-giving, protecting, and nourishing.

The various societies that worshiped Ishtar were highly developed civilizations. Writing, mathematics, legal codes, astronomy, canal-building, and—in some places—weapons characterized their cultures. With weaponry, the identity of the Goddess changed, as she also became responsible for the victory of the warrior-king. But this newfound association was a dubious one. The traditional Goddess had represented a positive force, and, as long as women had ruled the world, wars had been rare. The new, war-like image of the Goddess reflected a profound shift in social structure: Men's power was on the rise, and women's position was changing.

It is Ishtar's positive side that is represented on the plate. Here she is the many-breasted giver of life, the omnipotent female creator, whose presence on the table marks the apogee of women's power in the ancient world. Reverence for the female body and its spiritual powers had been transiated into real social and political power. Women had laid the groundwork for the development of a complex civilization, and the great figure of Ishtar acknowledged the potency of our foremothers. Worshiped by men and women alike, Ishtar was the supreme symbol of an ancient religion that extolled the feminine, even at a time when women were already beginning to lose their stature in the secular world.

When I was a child, I did theater pieces on my back porch, directing the other children of the neighborhood. I always reserved the role of priestess for myself, beginning with the phrase, "Tomorrow at sunrise, Ishtar will rise." While I was working on Ishtar's plate, I thought of my childhood incantation and wondered how I had happened to utter those words.

The Ishtar plate, which employs pen work over a surface achieved with eight fired layers of liquid-bright gold and rainbow luster, rests on an appliqued and embroidered runner. The motif of the runner is derived from the arch of the Ishtar Gate and the Ziggurat of Ur, both famous architectural monuments of Babylonia.

KALI

My reason for choosing Kali for the dinner table is complicated. Although 'The Dinner Party' was not intended to include women outside Western Civilization, Kali, an ancient Indian goddess, provides a rather dramatic representation of what has been considered the destructive aspect of the Mother Goddess. I felt compelled to deal with such a figure because the idea that powerful women are harmful is deeply ingrained in present-day society, and I believe it is a result of the distorted mythology we have inherited. I wanted to represent, explore, and transform an archetypal symbol of the female as devourer/destroyer, and I chose Kali for that purpose. She is always represented as fierce, cruel, and bloodthirsty. A typical mantra used in her worship makes this clear: "Hail Kali, three-eyed goddess of horrid form, around whose neck a string of human skulls a pendant—Salutation to thee with this blood." Depicted as a hideous creature, she was supposed to love strife and rejoice in drinking the blood of those she destroyed.

In most ancient myths, female power was considered awesome, but essentially positive. Although the Goddess often possessed the power of death, life and death were considered indivisible and part of the same process. It was that process which was celebrated in the fertility rituals until, gradually, attitudes toward the Goddess—and hence toward women—changed. The 'death' aspect of the Mother Goddess ceased to be part of a unified and venerated concept and became instead a separate and terrifying entity.

By the time of Ishtar (who predated Kali), women had begun to lose some of their former status in Mesopotamia as well as in other parts of the world. Kali began to be worshiped during the first millennium B.C. in the Hindu religion. When Hinduism became established, so did a rigidly patriarchal family system. Women were placed under the complete control of men, with such results as infanticide of females, polygamy, child-marriage, and eventually widow-burning, or 'suti.' Women lost all education and all rights and could only look forward to marriage and children, without which they had no identity.

As the Kali image was among the first plates I painted, my iconography was generally less specific than it became later. The arms that extend from her dark body are derived from the many-armed representations that are so prevalent in traditional Indian symbols of this supposedly terrifying goddess. The plate rests on a runner translated from my painted design by Connie von Briesen, a painter and needleworker. Working with overlays of transparent materials, she transformed the gaping maw and dancing fingers associated with Kali into a compelling—rather than frightening—image.

SNAKE GODDESS

When I was an art student studying art history, I saw a small female figure from Crete with snakes coiled around her arms. The professor said that little was known about the origin of this Snake Goddess, but I always preferred it to later, better known Greek statues. Recent research has established that, until 1400 B.C., Crete was matriarchal. Something about that Cretan goddess had spoken to me across the centuries, and now I know it was her spiritual power.

The Snake Goddess in 'The Dinner Party' incorporates the colors and symbols of its historic antecedent: Outstretched arms of pale yellow grow from a center form whose egg-like shapes represent the generative force of the goddess. The runner employs Cretan patterns, with two spectacular golden snakes embroidered on the back. Flounces reminiscent of the skirts worn by Cretan women complete this contemporary image of an ancient deity.

The relationship between the snake and the female has its origins in the goddess religions of earliest history. The snake was the embodiment of psychic vision and oracular divination, both of which were traditionally considered to be part of women's magical powers. The snake was connected to a succession of goddesses for thousands of years, even into Greek times. The priestesses of the goddesses served as advisors and counselors to their societies, entering trance states in order to solve the problems that were presented to them. Priestesses achieved these trances through fasting and through snake bites or administration of snake venom, which produced altered states of consciousness. In such states, the priestesses were considered to be in direct communication with the goddess.

It was in Crete that the snake aspect of the Mother Goddess religion reached its highest development, and there the beautiful remains of a great civilization have been unearthed. The snake in Cretan society represented the wisdom of the goddess and was associated with life, death, and regeneration. Venerated as a protector of the household, the snake was also considered the reincarnation of a dead family member. Special rooms equipped with snake tubes (which enabled snakes to travel through the house) were found in many homes.

Snakes were also associated with fertility and the growth of vegetation. They appeared on statues of the Mother Goddess and were usually green with purple-brown spots, the color of plant life. Later the male role in procreation became known and the snake came to symbolize the male principle. But the male consort/son was always subordinate to the goddess in Crete, never developing an independent god status. There were no male cult figures or phallic symbols, and most sacred scenes depict the Mother Goddess in conjunction with the tree of life. Crete was organized around a female totem system of clans and was primarily agricultural; for two thousand years, until its invasion by the Myceneans, it remained a peaceful land under matriarchy.

SOPHIA

Conceived as the highest form of feminine wisdom, Sophia is an abstract symbol in which female power, once actualized in social and religious structures, is transformed into a purely spiritual dimension. The concept of Sophia developed in the centuries after Christ, when early gnostic religions believed in her as an incorporeal entity—the active thought of God—who created the world. She is traditionally portrayed as a single delicate flower, a spiritual whole in which the material world is transcended. In this idea, one can still see the dim outlines of the Primordial Goddess, but the original force of the Goddess concept was steadily diminished as Sophia became an ever less substantial being. The later medieval concept of woman as spiritual intermediary, expressed most clearly in the relationship between Beatrice and Dante, is a result of gradual erosion of the pre-Christian idea of a female deity who was powerful in and of herself.

Sophia is usually represented as nourishing the human spirit and transforming it, as individuals strive for greater understanding of the mystery of life. Her identity merges with that of the Virgin Mary, and both are depicted as having nurturing and regenerative powers. A medieval manuscript drawing presented Mary suckling two Apostles with her milk, and, in a beautiful drawing, Dante rendered Sophia as the supreme flower of light.

Sophia was a very difficult image for me to paint, tending as I do toward strong, earthy forms. Moreover, in china-painting one can only go from light to dark. It is almost impossible to make a form lighter, because white or light colors are generally so transporent that they do not cover previous coats of darker paint. One uses the white of the clay body to work against, allowing the ground to provide the luminosity one would achieve in oil painting by simply bringing the light area back through impasto painting. It was not easy to represent the muting of women's former strength, which is another aspect of Sophia's portrait.

I painted this plate repeatedly, firing each of the three versions seven or more times. In the first two plates, the paint cracked on the last firing because I piled a light tone too heavily while trying to regain the paleness I had lost by applying too much color.

The plate is placed on a runner made of thin pieces of colored chiffon, each one carefully formed into a flower petal. Color shades color to create a richly hued floral wreath whose tones are then concealed by layers of thin white fabric and shrouded by the wedding veil of Karen Valentine, who, with Stephanie Martin, worked on this runner. The netting that covers the surface of the runner renders it as pallid as life became for women as a result of the death of the Goddess.

AMAZON

Amazon societies are thought to have existed during the third and second millennia B.C., one on a lost island off the coast of North Africa and another on the southern shore of the Black Sea. Myths characterize these people as living most of the year in all-female societies and mating with men at random in the spring. Girls were taught pride in their sex, learning athletics and the martial arts in order to preserve their independence. Male children were supposedly killed or crippled and made to work as servants.

While little actual evidence has been found to support the reality of entire societies of warrior women, there are many documented instances of women leading battles or fighting side by side with men. The Greeks left us the most extensive information about the Amazon, but research contradicts their mythology, informing us that matriarchal societies were usually communal, clan-based structures and were egalitarian, democratic, and peaceable. It is possible that we have not yet uncovered existing evidence of warrior queendoms or that matriarchal societies fought in battles only when their power was being challenged in a vain effort to turn the tide.

Although the names of many warrior queens are known, I chose to depict a symbolic Amazon rather than a particular woman. Her portrait incorporates some of the most fundamental symbols of the mother cults. The white egg, the red crescent, and the black stone combine to make the body of this Amazon warrior. (The white egg, symbol of ferility, was carried by the women of Anatolia on the helms of their ships. Riding across the vast plains, women strapped the red crescent on their saddles as an homage to the Great Mother, whose worship was tied to the moon. In Sumeria, they carried a black stone—the earliest incarnation of the Goddess—in a cart drawn by oxen.)

Wearing metallic breastplates, the Amazon holds a double axe in each hand. (This double axe, part of the worship of the Mother Goddess in Crete, was traditionally used by women to cut down trees and clear the land.)

The iconography of the plate is repeated on the back of the runner. Red lacing borders the top and front of the runner; derived from images of Amazons in Greek sculpture, this lacing joins with a strip of red snakeskin like those Amazon women from the North wore in battle.

HATSHEPSUT (1503-1482 B.C.)

In ancient Egypt, men and women were equal under the law. Affection and consideration for the woman of the family is one of the most common motifs in tomb art, where husbands and wives are frequently seen embracing and sharing activities together. Women enjoyed economic independence, moving freely about the society.
New Kingdom Pharoahs prided themselves on keeping such good order in the country that women could travel anywhere without fear of being molested.

The position of women underwent changes during the three thousand years of Egyptian history, but certain features remained constant. While royal men and women shared the rule of the country equally, the throne was always passed on through the female line, as the principles of matrilineal descent and matrimonial inheritance rights were firmly established. Occasionally a matriarchy developed; four women are known to have ruled as Pharoahs, but little is known of any except Hatshepsut. Hatshepsut, the mighty ruler of the XVIII dynasty, was the daughter of a great warrior-king. She continued her father's policies of strengthening the country's defense, leading military expeditions to achieve this end. She initiated many construction projects, including the building and refurbishing of temples; she bolstered Egypt's economy through trade and achieved peace and prosperity during her reign. Hatshepsut's own words reveal the pride she felt in her accomplishments; "My command stands firm like the mountains and the sun's disk shines and spreads rays over the titulary of my august person, and my falcon rises high above the kingly banner unto all eternity."

Hatshepsut stands between the mythological and real worlds, as Pharoahs were considered to be the human incarnation of the Deity. Her plate is the first one on the table with any reliefing of the surface; this was accomplished after a year and a half of almost total failure. The center of the plate is slightly raised, which was achieved by carving into the surface of an unbisqued plate. The change in dimension is almost imperceptible, as we wanted to introduce the reliefing gradually. It was important to make a smooth transition between the precision of the Japanese plates and the slightly less exact form of our studio-made versions. Hatshepsut's portrait required three or four china-paint firings; we must have made this plate eight or ten times, trying several different clay bodies. The plate is set on a runner embroidered with hieroglyphs which loosely tell the story of Hatshepsut's life.

JUDITH (6th century B.C.)

Judith, a Jewish heroine, is a legendary figure whose story is told in the 'Book of Judith,' written to inspire the Jews to acts of heroism. Judith lived in the town of Bethulia, which had been conquered by the Assyrian general Holofernes and his troops. Jews were forced into exile, taken into slavery, or persecuted for their refusal to play tribute to Holofernes' king. Judith, a very devout and learned woman, decided to take action against the enemy while most of her fellow Jews were bemoaning their fate.

She prayed for the strength to take vengeance on those ". . .who had loosened a maiden's headdress to defile her and stripped her thigh to shame her, and profaned her womb to disgrace her. . .," an obvious reference to the rape of the women of her town. Putting on festive attire, Judith adorned herself in jewels and—taking along wine, cheese, oil, bread, and figs—entered the camp of Holofernes. She easily passed by his soldiers, who did not suspect that a woman could be a real threat, and was invited to feast with the general. They drank a great deal of the wine, which Judith—skilled in herbs and powders—had carefully prepared. The liquid put Holofernes to sleep, and, silently, Judith went up to his bedpost. Taking Hologernes' sword in her hand, she caught him by the hair and cut off his head with two sharp strokes. She then wrapped the tyrant's head in some cloth and stole from the tent. She reached the gates of the city without detection and placed Holofernes' head on one of the gateposts of the city for all to see. The army—disoriented by the loss of their leader—retreated, and the Jews honored Judith with feasts and praises. The women held a special ceremony in which they sang, played instruments, and danced all day and into the night in honor of their savior.

The Judith plate rests on a runner whose embroidered Hebrew letters identify Judith as a heroine of her people. The iconography of the runner is derived from the headdress traditionally worn by Hebrew women during the marriage ceremony. Encrusted with jewels and spangles, dowry coins were hung directly on the headdress, a rather overt demonstration of some of the Hebraic attitudes toward women.

SAPPHO (around 600 B.C.)

Sappho, the greatest lyric poet and one of the finest poets of Western Civilization, was born on the island of Lesbos in 612 B.C. There, where the bright sun filled the air with light and the blue water sparkled, women came and went as they pleased, for they knew nothing of the changes that were taking place in other lands. Women were highly valued in Lesbos, well-educated and free to pursue their interests and develop their talents. Sappho spent most of her life on this island, where she founded a "thiasos"—a sacred society of women who were bound by special ties.

Each year this society participated in religious festivals that were held for women only, as ancient religions were based on the idea that she who gives birth has power over life and death. This power was expressed in music, with singing, dancing, and playing instruments considered divine arts belonging to women. Ancient rock paintings depict female musicians, and there are hundreds of myths and legends about the musical activities of goddesses, priestesses, and musicians. In tribal times, women gathered in the sacred menstrual huts they had built and welcomed their daughters' first menses with celebratory songs. Women sang as they worked in the fields and composed melodies as they wove. They crooned softly to each other to ease the pain of childbirth, and, when death struck, female musicians were summoned to mourn. The basic sound of women's music was the wail, and through women's songs of ecstasy, grief, or joy, the feelings of the community were expressed. But when women's authority waned, their music ceased.

Sappho became a renowned teacher, with many women gathering around her to learn the arts of poetry, music, and dancing. Her fame spread throughout Greece; statues were erected in her honor; her likeness was imprinted on coins; and her poetry was thought to rival Homer's. In addition to developing new poetic structures and meters, Sappho is known for poems expressing her love of women, often in openly erotic terms. Homosexuality was then viewed as a natural impulse for both women and men. Because Sappho came from the island of Lesbos, the word 'lesbian' has come to mean a woman who loves women.

This eminent woman, so celebrated in her own time, later became the object of ridicule. She was satirized and maligned by Greeks, and her love of women was distorted by Roman writers into something unfeminine and perverse. The Church made her a criminal for her eroticism and homosexuality. Fanatical monks burned her poems, so that only a few hundred lines still survive.

Sappho's portrait is inspired by the fact that she was known as 'the flower of the graces,' whose colors were green and lavender. On the back of her runner is a Doric temple, and between its columns can be seen the brilliant blue of the Aegean sky. Sappho's name rests within a burst of color that stands for the last burst of unimpeded female creativity.

ASPASIA (470-410 BC)

Unlike Sappho, Aspasia stood as a lonely woman in an environment which systematically isolated women. Athenian society, as it became progressively more democratic for men, became increasingly repressive for women of all classes, eventually subjecting them to total segregation. Women sat with men only at the marriage feast; afterward they lived in separate quarters and rarely were permitted outside. Girls were kept in ignorance, while boys were required to learn to read and write. Because of the enormous emphasis on intellect in this culture, the fact that most women were virtually illiterate created a deep gap between the sexes.

Aspasia came to Athens from an area of Greece where women were still allowed some independence. She joined the ranks of the 'hetaerae' (a word that originally was used by Sappho to refer to her companions, but later took on pejorative meaning), who were the only Athenian women to participate in Greek culture.

Aspasia, a scholar and philosopher, became the companion of the orator and statesman Pericles. They began to live together in 445 B.C., and soon the most learned men of the day frequented their house. Aspasia had created the first know salon, which allowed her—as it would allow women after her—to be part of the intellectual dialogue of the day. She was particularly known for discussing the role of women in society, asserting the right of woman to live as man's equal, not his slave. She urged her male guests to bring their wives to her salon, and for the first time these women were exposed to Greek culture. For such heretical behavior, Aspasia was eventually charged and tried for 'impiety.' Only Pericles' intervention on her behalf saved her life.

Aspasia's portrait is done in muted tones of the earth colors which the Greeks loved to paint on their sculptures and their buildings. Her plate sits on a runner whose motifs are taken from Greek vases. Draped fabric, formed to resemble the costumes favored by the Athenians, embellishes both the front and the back of the runner. Two embroidered pins hold the drapery to the runner much as a jeweled clasp decorated the Greek toga.

BOADACEIA (1st century A.D.)

Boadaceia, whose plate is the twelfth on the table, represents the tradition of warrior-queens extending back into legendary times. The portrait of this British heroine is slightly carved, its surface raised more than any other on the first wing of the table. The plate was remade at least six times, one cracking at the bisque stage, one in the glaze firing, and two more when nearly completed. An image of a stone structure reminiscent of Stonehenge (an ancient British monument whose origin is unknown) cradles a helmet-form decorated with motifs from gold shields of the time. The plate rests on a runner of made felt, an old-fashioned fabric made by shearing sheep and compacting wool. We designed convoluted patterns that resembled the motifs of early British art and stitched them onto the felt, embellishing the forms with jeweled pieces like those Boadaceia might have worn.

Although available information about early Celtic life is sketchy, it is known that women had legal and political rights. Celtic religion had powerful female deities who, much like Ishtar, conferred the right to rule on the king in a ritual mating designed to ensure the fertility of the land and the people. Boadaceia, growing up in such a society, had no difficulty in establishing her right to rule after the death of her husband, the king.

Living during a period when the Romans were spreading their empire into the British Isles, however, Boacaceia's people, the Iceni, were conquered by the Romans and then—though only for a short while—left relatively undisturbed. Boadaceia's husband had willed half his property to the Roman Emperor (this was required of conquered rulers) and the other half to Boadaceia and their two daughters, in the hope that this inheritance would protect his family from the Romans. Instead, the will was used as a pretext for Roman officials to regard the whole kingdom as their spoil. They seized the estate of Boadaceia's relatives, then broke into the queen's quarters. Boadaceia was bound, flogged, and forced to witness the brutal rape of her daughters by Roman soldiers.

Enraged, the great queen called together neighboring tribes, all of whom despised Roman rule. Uniting them in one great army, she said, "Roman lust has gone so far that not even our own persons remain unpolluted. If you weight well the strengths of our armies, you will see that in this battle we must conquer or die. This is a woman's resolve. As for the men, they may live or be slaves."

With men and women fighting side by side, the British attached the Roman oppressors and at first seemed successful. But Boadaceia's apparent triumph was of short duration—the Romans were a highly skilled army, while Boadaceia's troops were unaccustomed to single combat. The Roman general, who hated Boadaceia, vented his rage on her people, slaughtering over 80,000 and leading a campaign of annihilation against entire sections of the British community. Boadaceia managed to make her way home, where she took poison rather than accept her defeat.

HYPATIA (370-415)

Hypatia, a Roman scholar and philosopher who lived in Alexandria, is the last representative at the table of female genius and culture in the classical world. The Coptic imagery of Alexandria is used extensively in both her plate and her runner. Her portrait has indented, scalloped edges, as if the image had broken slightly from its confines. Painted in strong colors, the leaf forms describing Hypatia pull away from the center, suggesting the events of her life. The plate is placed on a runner whose border patterns are drawn directly from Coptic weaving, as is the small goddess whose head illuminates Hypatia's name. The back of the runner, woven by Jan du Bois from my design, emphasizes the horror of this distinguished woman's death.

Unlike most of their Athenian sisters, Roman women were educated, particularly those who lived where Egyptian influence was strong. Hypatia, a child prodigy, was tutored by the most celebrated scholars of her day. She rapidly mastered mathematics, astronomy, and the natural sciences and became famous in these fields. Because she was an outstanding scholar and very popular as well, she was appointed head of the University of Alexandria.

Hypatia attempted to create an intellectual reawakening of reverence for the Greek gods and goddesses. She particularly stressed the importance of goddesses and the feminine aspects of culture, arguing that the Mother Goddess religion conferred dignity, influence, and power on women. When consulted about the unrest in Rome, she stated that Roman men had misused their women—causing the next generations to be born not through love, but through seduction and rape. This had produced violence and turmoil in the empire that could only be solved, she said, by elevating women to their former status.

Through her eloquent teachings, Hypatia attracted both plain and cultured people to her philosophy and gradually became a political force that threatened the power of the emerging Church. Constantine had already proclaimed Christianity the State religion, but the Church had not yet established sole control. Hypatia was anathema to many Christians; the Bishop of Alexandria despised her, no doubt in part because she dared to preach. Silence and submission were what he expected of women, and Hypatia's stature in Alexandrian society incensed him.

Because she had become an advisor to the government, it was difficult for the Bishop to openly attack Hypatia. Instead, he organized a group of fanatical monks who waylaid her on the way to her weekly lecture at the university. Dragging her from her carriage, they pulled her limbs from their sockets, plucked out her organs, hacked her remains into pieces, and burned them. Years later, when the great library of Alexandria was sacked, Hypatia's writings, like her body, were burned.

MARCELLA (325-410)

Marcella, born of a noble and wealthy family, lived in Rome during the time when the Roman Empire was crumbling. She was forced to marry at an early age, and, although widowed while still quite young, dedicated herself to a religious life instead of following Roman custom and remarrying. She had become interested in Christianity, particularly in the doctrine that 'in Christ there is neither male nor female,' an idea to which some Christians still subscribed, despite the misogynist teachings of the Church.

There were then a number of religious communities where men and women had equal rights. Women taught, baptized, served at the altar, held public office, and generally exercised considerable power. As the Church became more organized, however, women were excluded from many of the activities they had previously been able to perform.

Marcella withdrew from Roman society and made her palace a center for women who were interested in a simple life of purpose. Many women gathered around her—some because they were devoted Christians, some because they desired an alternative to the growing decadence in the classical world, and some because they wished to avoid a forced and loveless marriage. In Marcella's community, called the "Little Church of the Household," women studied religion and the Scriptures and—under her guidance—

were educated in the Christian way of life. They traveled and preached, set up religious houses and schools for women, established hospitals, and ministered to the sick and needy.

In 410, during the Sack of Rome, Marcella was beaten by invading soldiers and her estate destroyed. Although she was able to escape, she died shortly thereafter. But Marcella had planted the seed that flowered into the great monastic system of Christianity which, for centuries, provided women with education and a refuge from their increaingly circumscribed world. Her convent was to be only the first of many communities of religious women.

Marcella's plate is done in luminous but modulated tones. It sits on a runner which is embroidered with a basilica structure, the earliest architectural form of Christian churches. The front of the runner has a rough surface, woven like the hair shirts worn by Marcella and the women in her community. The back of the runner carries Marcella's symbols, a scroll, a boat, and a fish, acquired when she became a saint.

SAINT BRIDGET (435-523)

Christianity spread slowly through Europe, and meanwhile the Church absorbed many of the customs and divinities from earlier times. Thus when Christianity came to Ireland, instead of destroying the Celtic traditions, it preserved them. Like many indigenous peoples, the Celts had held to the mores and customs fo the age of matriarchy. Mother Goddess worship still existed in Ireland when the early Christian evangelists arrived, and religious leaders encouraged the populace to bring their traditional convictions, deities, rituals, and holidays into the structure of the Christian faith. This process of cultural amalgamation is clearly demonstrated in the story of Saint Bridget.

Bridget, a patron saint of Ireland, founded the first convent there, was important in the development of monasticism, and contributed to the Irish Renaissance. Born in 453, she resolved as a young girl to consecrate her life to religion. Since there were then no religious houses for women, she established a cell in the trunk of a giant oak tree which had formerly been used as a shrine of the Mother Goddess Brigid (with whom Bridget later became identified). There, Bridget gathered a number of other young women around her and founded a sisterhood devoted to teaching and charity. She soon built the first nunnery in Ireland on that site.

Bridget's convent eventually grew to be a great monastery and center of learning; men as well as women worked under her benevolent leadership. Bridget
was one of the earliest Christians to make the monastery a kind of settlement house, to which all the neighboring peasants could come for help, advice, and education. Under her inspiration, the arts flourished and a masterpiece of an illuminated manuscript was produced at the monastery. She also established a school of metalwork that became famous for its exquisitely crafted product. Bridget traveled extensively, established new religious houses and monasteries, and was extremely influential in both political and Church affairs. After her death she became extraordinarily popular, and countless churches,monasteries, and villages were named after her.

Through Bridget the Celts maintained their religious ties to Mother Goddess worship, for she came to be associated with all the symbols that had formerly belonged to the Celtic goddess. Vestal virgins had kept a sacred fire burning for Brigid, and this custom was taken over by nuns who maintained the flame until the convents were dissolved. Fire was holy to the Goddess, who was often depicted with a column of fire—an image of immortality which I incorporated into Saint Bridget's plate, painted in the colors of Ireland.

The plate rests on a runner covered by a bark-colored silk and embellished by an oak cross and a panel carved with Celtic motifs. Christian and Celtic imagery is combined in the plate and the runner to represent the continued tradition of the Mother Goddess as it was incorporated into the worship of this female saint.

THEODORA (508-548)

Theodora, the famed Byzantine empress, began her life as an actress—a profession that was despised in Byzantine society. After living a rather dissolute early life, she became religious and established herself in Constantinople, living simply and supporting herself by spinning. Shortly thereafter she met Justinian, the Emperor's nephew, and they were married as soon as he was able to have the laws changed to permit union between himself and a woman of humble origins. Theodora was crowned with Justinian in 527 and became the Empress of Byzantium. In Ravenna, a cathedral built by them is filled with glittering mosaics that depict the joint rule of the royal couple. Theodora's plate incorporates both the color and technique of these mosaic walls.

It required months for Judye Keyes to develop this plate, which cracked repeatedly in the kiln. We experimented with several clay bodies and made at least a dozen plates before we succeeeded. Keyes first applied individual tiles to the surface of an unfired clay plate; then she decided to lay a slab onto the plate and carefully cut it with a sharp tool to create the illusion of separate tiles, scratching notches even deeper after the plate was bisqued. Five china-painted firings were needed to build up the color and the gold. Theodora's runner, embroidered by Marjorie Biggs, repeats the motifs on the plate. The plate rests on a gold halo, which, like the halo around Theodora's head in the Ravenna mural, honors this great empress for her efforts on behalf of women.

Theodora was, from the beginning of her reign, deeply concerned about the position of women. She never forgot the suffering and humiliation she had seen women endure when she was an actress. Prostitution was rampant in Constantinople, and there were brothels throughout the city. To supply these houses, procurers traveled around the empire seducing poor wimen with clothes, jewelry, and money. Other women were forced into prostitution through seduction and rape. Once a woman had been brought to a brothel, she was virtually a prisoner. Even if she escaped there was nowhere for her to go, for she was a moral outcast—as were actresses. Often the latter were forced, against their wills, to sign contracts binding them to the theaters for which they worked.

Theodora passed laws nullifying these contracts and broke down barriers that kept actresses in a socially inferior role. She issued an imperial decree making it illegal—and punishable by death—to entice a woman into prostitution, and she turned one of the palaces into an institution where prostitutes could go to start new lives. She helped raise the low status of women in marriage, improved the divorce laws in their favor, passed laws protecting women from mistreatment by their husbands, saw to it that women could inherit property, and instituted the death penalty for rape. Moreover, Theodora personally enforced all these women's rights measures and left a legacy that enhanced Byzantine women's lives for many years.

HROSVITHA (935-1002)

Hrosvitha, Germany's earliest poet and dramatist, occupies a unique place in literary history, for she was the first playwright in medieval Europe. She was a member of the Saxon tribe, one of the last German tribes to resist conversion until Charlemagne conquered them and they were forcibly Christianized. With the development of feudalism, German women lost their traditional property rights. In an effort to retain their land, countless princesses refused to relinquish their property to their husbands and founded religious houses instead. Aided by the Church, they retreated to the convents they had established and, as abbesses, ruled independently of men; in some cases they were responsible only to the king, not to the Church. If the abbess was related to the ruling family, heading an abbey could make her extremely powerful—the political equal, in fact, of a baron of the land.

Gandersheim, the convent which Hrosvitha entered when she was young, was a free abbey. Her abbess' relationship with the nobility meant that Hrosvitha had the opportunity to associate with the scholars, churchmen, and royalty who visited there. Like most girls who were convent-trained, Hrosvitha was well educated; she studied Latin and Greek and was taught scholastic philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and music. She proved a gifted student and soon began to write, at first secretly. ("Unknown to others and secretly, I wrote by myself. Sometimes I composed, sometimes I destroyed what I had written.") After working for some years, Hrosvitha collected her poems and dedicated them to her abbess, who encouraged her and brought her work to the attention of the educated world. The poems were well received, and Hrosvitha continued to write.

She wrote sacred legends in verse, historical poems, prose prefaces, and the history of the Ottonian dynasty. But her most important works were her plays. Hrosvitha wrote a series of dramas which dealt with the conflict of virtue and spiritual aspiration versus evil and the temptation of sin. In developing these dramas, she looked to the Roman playwright Terence, whose plays all turned on the frailty of the female sex. Hrosvitha challenged Terence's misogyny, and the keynote of her work was its celebration of women. In her plays, men embodied paganism and lust, while women were shown as strong, steadfast, and representing the purity and gentleness of Christianity.

The story of Hrosvitha's life is recounted on the back of her runner, embroidered by Mary Elliott in a needlework technique called Opus Teutonicum. Commonly employed by German nuns, this type of embroidery utilizes flat patterning and simple drawing. The front of the runner is embellished with four raised, circular forms that resemble the medieval coins minted by abbesses. These padded discs portray popular tales and legends from pre-Christian Germany. Images of an armed Valkyrie and a bloodthristy Cimbrian princess recall the time when women appeared in armor, fighting and uttering loud shrieks to drive away advancing armies. Hrosvitha's plate, which repeatedly cracked, was remade more than a dozen times and changed its form during the months it took to get it out of the kiln. Deeply reliefed, the plate combines the ivory carvings of Ottonian art with the praying hands and nun's cap typically associated with religious women.

TROTULA (d. 1097)

In Salerno, as in most of southern Italy, Byzantine influence was strong. Thanks to the laws of Theodora, the position of women was better than in any other civilized society of the time. Against a luxuriant background of terraced vineyards, men and women studied together at the medical school, the first university of the Western world. While most of Europe was still relying on saints' relics, prayers, and poisonous rememdies for curing sickness, Salerno doctors were employing the more advanced forms of medical healing. Among them was a group of women doctors, the most prominent of whom was Trotula.

Although she was a renowned physician, author, and professor, it was as a gynecologist that Trotula won lasting fame. Her carved symbol derives from the Aztec goddess of healing, who took the form of a serpent, and is combined with a birth image, pre-Columbian motifs, and a caduceus (a rod entwined with two snakes that has become the modern symbol of medicine). I chose the snake motif because of its historical association with feminine wisdom and powers of healing. The runner incorporates a tree of life motif, traditional in women's needlework and appropriate, I thought , to Trotula's profession. We used a quilting technique called Trapunto after discovering an example done in the eleventh century in nearby Sicily.

Trotula's husband and two sons were also physicians, and they worked together on a new medical encyclopedia. At the university of Salerno, where she taught, the curriculum included practical work and bedside instruction based on close observation of the patient. Since doctors were forbidden by the Church to dissect the human body, diagnosis was dependent on symptoms of disease. Trotula excelled at observations of the pulse, urine, facial expression, and 'feel' of the skin; using these indices, she could distinguish between diseases whose overt symptoms were the same.

Trotula wrote prolifically on gynecology and obstetrics, and her book 'Diseases of Women' was consulted for 700 years after her death. In order to help women by describing the diseases tht affected them, Trotula synthesized in this book the information she had gained from her vast practical experience concerning pregnancy, menstruation, sterility, difficulties in labor, emergency procedures for midwives, and abortions. She was the first doctor to give advice on the care of the newborn infant, and throughout her writings she stressed hygiene, cleanliness, and exercise—at a time when people thought disease was cured magically. When she died in l097, her casket was attended by a procession of mourners two miles long. Centuries later male doctors dismissed Trotula as a witch, and for a time it was believed that her book had been written by a man.

The twelfth century brought with it a general revolution in medical training, but women gradually came to be excluded from the profession. With the exception of those in Italy, the new universities—where medicine was increasingly emphasized—would not accept female students. Medicine slowly became closed to them through civil restrictions, prohibitions, legal actions, and, finally, persecution.

ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE (1122-1204)

Eleanor of Aquitaine was one of the most powerful women of the Middle Ages. Born to the ruling family of southern France, she was raised in a court where the women had considerable power. Eleanor inherited the rich duchy of Aquitaine and brought her property, as well as the liberal ideas of her childhood, to the court of Louis VII, whom she married when she was fifteen.

In Paris the young queen attempted to find an outlet for her ambitions, but her husband was hostile toward women's authority and thwarted her every move. When the king informed Eleanor of his intention to leave for the Crusades, she insisted on going with him. Louis opposed her, and capitulated only because the nobles of southern France would not support him unless they were led by their queen. Eleanor organized three hundred young women and prepared them for the long journey. The Queen's Amazons, dressed in coats of mail and skirts of tinted silk, carried the special insignia of the Amazonian corps on their sleeves. They followed Eleanor to be of service—to attend the sick and to fight when they could. But the Crusade was a disaster and ultimately led to a divorce between France's king and queen.

Eleanor then married Henry of England and helped him gain the crown. She had hoped to expand her power, but was eventually imprisoned by her husband instead. In an effort to regain her ancestral lands, the queeen had encouraged her sons to revolt against their father. While the king and the princes were eventually to be reconciled, Eleanor remained sequestered for sixteen years.

Before her imprisonment Eleanor had established the Courts of Love, graced by the troubadour peotry which had been introduced by her grandfather and carried with Eleanor from the French to the English throne. She made this 'religion of the gentle heart' the foundation of courtly love throughout the land. By sustaining the troubadours, noblewomen were able to make their courts major cultural and social centers and thereby play a primary role in shaping the mores and values of their class. In feudal castles women heard cases concerning relationships between women and men. Their judgments were then communicated by the menstrels, who spread revèrence for women through poetry and song. Although this idealization of women ultimately had negative effects, for awhile women's lives were improved and their influence felt as a powerful force.

Eleanor's plate—made by casting a dome, applying it to a greenware plate, and then cutting through the dome to make a lattice-work—is done with pen work on top of overlaid lusters. The image, a fleur-de-lis, was a common symbol in the Middle Ages and relates to the iris, the sacred flower of the Virgin Mary. The plate rests on a tapestry woven by Audrey Cowan from my cartoon based on the Unicorn Tapestries. A corral imprisons the plate, containing it as Eleanor was contained. Surrounding the corral are flowers like the ones with which women covered the floors of their castles, where the Courts of Love were held.

HILDEGARDE OF BINGEN (1098-1179)

Hildegarde of Bingen, the monastic counterpart of Eleanor of Aquitaine, was one of the greatest and most original thinkers of medieval Europe. She was an abbess, a scientist, a leading medical woman, a scholar, a musician and prolific composer, a political and religious figure, and a visionary. Her writings are among the earliest important mystic works of the Middle Ages.

Hildegarde's own illumination of her vision of the universe was the basis of my design for the back of her runner; I wanted to honor her unique view of the world. When I saw her drawings, I felt deeply moved by the beautiful, centered images that reached across eight centuries and united her vision with mine. The top and front of her runner form a Gothic cathedral, embroidered and couched in the gold stitiching called Opus Anglicanum, which was used to embellish the vestments of bishops and kings. Her plate, painted like a stained-glass window, rests inside the Gothic arch and forms the rose window—the exalted spiritual focus of every medieval church.

Hildegarde spent almost her entire life in the convent, where she received an excellent education. She later headed a small monastery for women—established after she had a series of visions that told her where to found her religious house. She did this in the face of great opposition from churchmen, who attempted to denounce the authenticity of her revelations and only agreed to her plan when she became gravely ill. She was sufficiently important that they did not want her to die.

The leading medical writer of her day, Hildegarde wrote books on medicine which foreshadowed later ideas on the circulation of the blood and the characteristics of the nervous system. Her remedies for disease revealed a wide knowledge of drugs and herbs, and her medical treatments, despite their emphasis on magic, were quite progressive. Also a natural scientist, she cataloged and described plants, particularly those with medicinal properties.

Hildegarde maintained a voluminous correspondence with leading medieval thinkers and became increasingly involved with the political and religious issues of the day. In her later years, she concentrated on developing a theory of the universe which stressed the relationship between the divine and the human. Like Dante, Hildegarde conceived the universe holistically and emphasized the inseparability of the physical and the spiritual. In her writings she described her revelations and their allegorical meanings, which involved commentary on the Scriptures, the Trinity, and other religious issues. These works became quite popular and helped reinforce the idea that a strong Church was necessary as a source of morality and spiritual regeneration. Unfortunately, as has happened throughout history, the institution Hildegarde supported ultimately betrayed her, but she died before she could witness the way the Church organized witch hunts attacked those of her sex.

PETRONILLA DE MEATH (d. 1324)

Despite the spread of Christianity throughout Europe, much of the local population clung to the traditional worship of the Mother Goddess. Many rural peoples tacitly accepted Christianity but continued to worship the Goddess, sometimes incorporating their particular female deity into the figure of Mary. The practices and rituals of the ancient doctrines became known as witchcraft—a joyous religion that worshiped the life force and treated women with respect. The Church became steadily more threatened by the power of witchcraft and was particularly incensed that it allowed women to preach.

The extent of the witch-hunting craze was much wider than is commonly thought. Eighty-five percent of those executed for witchcraft were women, and, although they were tried and burned on countless pretexts, their real crime was their attempt to preserve the traditions of the past and to resist the destruction of female power. Witch hunts were prevalent from the thirteenth through seventeenth centuries. According to male scholars, no more than three hundred thousand women were exterminated, but contemporary feminist scholars are beginning to suspect that there were probably between six and nine million killed. The exact figure is difficult to determine because few records were kept, but those that do exist are horrifying: Nine hundred people were accused of witchcraft and executed in a single year in southwestern Germany; in Toulouse, four hundred were put to death in a day; and there were some villages where nearly all the female inhabitants were wiped out.

One of the first documented witchcraft trials took place in Ireland in 1324. Petronilla de Meath, represented on the table as a symbol of all the women sacrificed as witches, worked as a maid for Lady Alice Kyteler. Kyteler was an extremely rich woman who had three previous husbands. Her fourth claimed that she was bewitching him, and a bishop—inspired in no small part by his desire to confiscate Kyteler's property—pursued the charges. Lady Alice, her son, Petronilla, and several others were accused of denying God and the Church, making animal sacrifices, and concocting secret potions. The noblewoman was also charged with having sexual relations with a man who could supposedly appear as both a black male and a cat. The witch hunters always emphasized sexuality during the witchcraft trials, and through the years the sexual charges brought against women became increasingly preposterous.

Lady Kyteler was able to escape to England, taking Petronilla's child, but Petronilla herself was imprisoned and tortured. Her arrest took place before the Church had devised detailed instructions on the use of torture to procure confessions and denunciations. Later, it became common to strip the accused woman naked, shave off all her body hair, and then subject her to thumbscrews and the rack, spikes and bone crushing boots, starvation and beatings. Petronilla was merely flogged and burned, refusing to the last to accept the Christian faith.

Petronilla's plate employs the symbols of the witches' covens. A bell, a book, and a candle are combined with the cauldron which traditionally represented the Great Mother and around which witches grouped. The flames that envelope the center of the plate are a terrible inversion of the sacred fire that once burned in honor of the Goddess of the ancient world. The runner engulfs Petronilla in twisted patterns derived from typical Irish-Celtic motifs and is bordered by a red garter that symbolizes a witch's belief.

CHRISTINE DE PISAN (I363-1431)

Despite the terror induced by the witchcraft trials, women continued striving to achieve. But the idea of female inferiority, a theme certainly present in medieval thought, took on new meaning in a society bent on containing female power and enforcing the domination of men. Throughout the Middle Ages, misogynist thinking was moderated by the Christian belief in spiritual equality between women and men. The increasing secularization of society undermined this later attitude and reinforced—in both theory and practice—women's dependency on men.

By the fourteenth century, townships had begun to rival the monasteries as intellectual centers. Although religious houses were open for men near these towns, female orders remained outside the new centers of learning. Women were generally excluded from the developing universities as well; if a male professor believed in education for women, he might allow them to sit in on his classes, but usually they were not permitted to speak. A father might decide to educate his daughters or let them assist him in his ork; however, a woman could not be apprenticed to an artist or even to a tradesman. The middle-class woman usually worked with her husband in the profession for which he had been trained, and, upon her husband's death, she could take over the business. Yet while there are many records of widows' success, these women were also a frequent target o the witch hunter's wrath. Meanwhile, in the nunneries, education was steadily deteriorating. The intellectual and artistic excellence of earlier times gave way to stricter confinement of nuns, their increased separation from the intellectual centers, and greater control of female houses by male bishops.

:Literature attacking women was becoming both prevalent and popular. In the late fourteenth century, one woman emerged who was dedicated to defending her sex. Christine de Pisan was the first female professional author in France. Educated by her father, a humanist from Italy, she was able to surmount many fo the barriers placed before women because he encouraged her talents. Widowed at twenty-five, she supported herself and her three children by writing. She first became prominent when she attacked a popular book, 'Le Roman del la Rose,' considered a cornerstone of French literature. This work outraged Christine by its vicious attack on women. She argued for the equality of women, and, because she was by that time one of the few women accepted in the world of letters, her arguments carried considerable weight.

Christine then wrote a book which recorded the achievements of women of the past. Called 'La Cite des Dames,' this work described a mythical city peopled by the greatest women of all periods and social classes. Stating that books which degraded women exerted an evil influence on people's minds, she offered her 'City of Women' as a tribute to the women of her times.

In Christine's plate, one wing is raised in a gesture which defends her own body and sybolically, other members of her sex. The runner's sharp points—stitched in a needlepoint technique popular in Christine's time—thrust toward the plate, and the angry Bargello patterns begin to encroach ever more severely on the space which surrounds the plate.

ISABELLA D'ESTE (1474-1539)

In Renaissance Italy, noblewomen exercised far less political power than they had during feudal times. What power they retained was a result of the continued tradition of female inheritance which still allowed women certain rights, but these rights became indirect and provisional. Even the so-called equal education of men and women, often pointed to as a distinct achievement of the Renaissance, was not at all what it was reputed to be. Although they studied much the same subjects as men, Renaissance ladies were ultimately expected to be charming, docile, and pleasing to their fathers, brothers, and husbands, whom they would never dare oppose.

Isabella d'Este was a perfect example of a Renaissance princess, and as such the symbolizes the countless women who have played this kind of role. Born during the height of the Italian Renaissance to the governing family of Ferrara, she was betrothed at six to the Duke of Mantua. Isabella, educated according to humanistic principles, became a more serious scholar than women were expected to be. She studied the classics as well as literature, theology, and languages. She read voraciously, with a particular love for poetry; was a talented musician; and, like other noblewomen, was proficient in embroidery and design. By the time she left her family's court to marry the Duke of Mantua, she was well prepared for her position as a Renaissance wife.

But D'Este was somewhat more ambitious than other women of her class. Although expected to be an art patron, she brought more than the usual taste and intelligence to that role, soon acquiring a collection that was the best in the land. And although she knew that her acquisitions brought glory to her husbnad, the Duke, she treasured her private museum, where she claimed the best work as her own. While—in contrast to the patronage of women like Eleanor of Aquitaine—Renaissance women's patronage in no way benefited their own sex, Isabella's position as patron allowed her some influence in the shaping of contemporary cultural life.

Like many other Renaissance women, D'Este's correspondence was vast. Two thousand of her letters still exist, many of them written to leading scholars and statesmen of her day. She became an important political figure and often governed and defended Mantua in her husband's absence. She devoted much of her energy to consolidating her family's position, ensuring the success of her sons' careers. She played a crucial part in Italian history, but, nontheless, her biography was not written for more than four hundred years—and even then many of her achievements were ignored.

Her plate was inspired by a richly decorated ceramic ware, Urbino majolica, made at a factory Isabella helped support; I was fascinated by its color and surface. The plate incorporates traditional majolica decoration with a reference, in its center, to the famous Renaissance pictorial space. The runner repeats the plate's motifs and uses the kind of Assisi needlework that Isabella herself may have done. The back of the runner carries an image derived from the D'Este crest, but this time in honor of a woman instead of the family in which she was obscured.

ELIZABETH R (1533-1605)

Elizabeth I's plate is an image of a great queen who said, in response to the counselors who cintinually pressured her to wed, 'I am already bound unto a husband, which is the Kingdom of England, and a marble stone should hereafter declare that a queen, having reigned such a time, lived and died a virgin.' (She referred to herself as a virgin in the traditional, rather than the modern, sense of that word—an independent woman, not dictated to by any man.) One of the greatest rulers of the Western world, Elizabeth is honored at the table by a white satin runner encrusted with gold and pearls and embellished by the blackwork embroidery prevalent in her time.

Elizabeth, whose birth had been cursed by her father—Henry VIII—because he wanted a male heir, ascended the throne of England in 1559. Among the most erudite women of the sixteenth century, she continued the tradition of female scholarship advocated by Catherine of Aragon (who brought these ideas from the Spanish court of her mother, Isabella, an ardent supporter of women's rights). Despite the presence of strong and learned women in the English courts, however, arguments against female rulers abounded. Because government was considered a masculine affair, Elizabeth was constantly urged to find a husband and give England a king—but she was determined to retain her autonomy and rule England in her own way. She even manipulated her marital status to forge alliances under the pretense of engagement, then forestalling the actual marriage while she obtained her political goals.

During the forty-five years Elizabeth governed England, the country prospered and grew. There was a vast increase in national power and economic wealth as well as a cultural renaissance that made England an intellectual and artistic center of the world. She was a humane and tolerant ruler and was able to decrease the religious struggles between Protestants and Catholics that threatened the stability of the land. She established religious tolerance, maintained relative peace throughout her reign, modernized the British Navy, and made diplomacy an art.

As one of the earliest heads of state to recognize the sovereignty of the people, Elizabeth built a popular base of support. She established the right to a fair trial and organized governmental relief for the old, the infirm, and the poor. Her death brought with it an end to respect for intellectual women that had prevaded English culture and politics. Reformation ideas, at first progressive with regard to women, became increasingly conservative—as reflected by the growing acceptance of Luther's dictum that 'Women should remain home, sit still, keep house and bear and bring up children.'

ARTEMISIA GENTILESCHI (1590-1652)

The end of monasticism brought with it a general decline in opportunities for a woman artist of the seventeenth century. Training became almost impossible to obtain, as apprenticeships—the primary vehicle for learning—were available only to men. Even the artisan guilds, formerly open to women (particularly in textiles), were gradually closed to them. One of the few ways a woman could acquire training was if her father was an artist and would teach her himself.

Artemisia Gentileschi's father, an Italian painter, recognized his daughter's talent when she was young. He taught her in his own studio, where she was protected from the world's doubts about a woman's ability to achieve. However, the artist her father hired to teach Gentileschi perspective skills raped her in the studio and almost ruined her life. The rapist was brought to trial, but it was Artemisia who was tortured and questioned. She refused to retract her accusation; the man was finally imprisoned but served less than eight months. Because she had openly admitted to being assaulted, Gentileschi became the object of endless gossip. She retained a reputation as a loose woman throughout her life, and this was always extremely painful to her.

In order to protect Artemisia from scandal, her father arranged for her to be married; but the marriage did not last, and she began to move about from town to town. Everywhere Gentilexchi went she painted—portraits as well as historical and religious works—and she soon became a well established artist. Though she received a number of commisssions, she had to struggle to be paid as much as a man would have been for the same work. However, she was admitted to the Academy of Design in Florence—a rare honor for a young woman.

The twisting, turning forms of Artemesia's plate represent both the baroque style she employed and the extraordinary efforts required of any woman of her time who wanted to make art. The draped velvet of her runner, which almost engulfs her plate, reflects the 'protective' environment (her father's studio) which shielded her from much of the world but harbored her rapist as well.

The women in Gentileschi's paintings—primarily heroines of the Bible or mythology—challenged prevailing ideas of the inferiority of the female sex, for she presented them as strong and courageous. One of her favorite themes was the story of Judith, savior of the Jews. From Judith's attack on Holofernes, Artemisia not only created a powerful image, but also expressed her outrage at the violence she had experienced.

Artemisia's canvases exhibit the dramatic use of lights and darks and the sensuous movements characteristic of the Italian baroque school. Her work is at its best, however, when she treats women with a sympathetic view, rendering them as full persons instead of sex objects for male eyes. Her important role in seventh-century painting is finally beginning to be understood. Although she was famous and successful in her own time, her art was later obscured—and some was even attributed to men of her era.

Gentileschi died in 1652, the first established woman artist to paint from a woman's point of view. Her work reaches out across the centuries, provides female images that affirm women, and offers solid evidence that women can also be great artists.

ANNA VAN SCHURMAN (1607-1678)

Embroidered on Anna von Schurman's runner is an abbreviated version of this poignant statement from a book she wrote advocating female education: 'Woman has the same erect countenance as man, the same ideals, the same love of beauty, honor, truth, the same wish for self-development, the same longing after righteousness, and yet she is to be imprisoned in an empty soul of which the very windows are shuttered.'
The lack of adequate education for women increasingly became the focus of those women who were able to write. Although writing was something women could do quietly, by themselves and out of sight of a society which really wasn't interested in what they had to say, even Reformation women tried to make themselves heard. One of the most extraordinary women of this period was Anna van Schurman.

Born in Holland, Van Schurman was a genius at a time when female genius was considered an impossibility. Because northern Europe was somewhat more liberal in its attitudes toward women, she was allowed not only to study but also to achieve some recognition for her work. Anna, a child prodigy, and her brothers were educated at home by their father. Although she received a classical education, at first she directed most of her energies toward art, devoting herself to those techniques she could teach herself. She did fine engraving, drawing, modeling in wax, wood-carving, etching on glass, oil painting, and intricate needlework. Most of her work has been destroyed, but some can still be found in European museums and in the area where she lived.

At that time, most intellectual discussions in Holland centered around religious issues. Van Schurman became interested in theological questions and studied Greek, Hebrew, and the ancient languages in order to read and interpret the Bible. As women were not admitted to the university, she had to attend lectures concealed behind the curtains of a box. The unfairness of this situation stimulated her to write a book in which she argued, both by logic and example, that women's native abilities were not being recognized. This work was followed by another in which she demanded the same educational opportunities for women as for men. These books made her famous and increasingly involved her in the international world of letters. Correspondence with important cultural figues was one way to participate in the intelllectual dialogue of the day, and Anna corresponded with those who shaped the values of European society.

As Van Schurman grew older, she withdrew from society, preferring the solitude of work. She became increasingly doubtful of the validity of prevailing religious dogma; she joined a religious community in which women had equal rights and lived there for the rest fo her life. Although the community was often persecuted, Anna preferred it to the injustice of secular life.

Van Schurman's plate is modestly colored, but the form tries to fly. It rests on a sampler embroidered in the Dutch needlework popular during Anna's life. At first samplers were done by professional embroiderers to demonstrate their skill, but soon became a vehicle for confining the activities of little girls. Forced from childhood to learn stitches which taught them patience, forebearance, and how to 'think small,' girls were thus conditioned to be docile and content with the female role.

ANNE HUTCHINSON (1591-1643)

After the death of George Washington, colonial women created an original form of needle painting—the mourning picture. Intended at first to commemorate the President's death, mourning pictures soon became a vehicle to express grief for the death of a loved one or sympathy for a neighbor's loss. These needle paintings were usually done on silk and reflected certain consistent motifs: a weeping willow tree, a tombstone and Grecian urn, and a grieving woman dressed in the then-popular neoclassical style. When Susan Hill and I first saw these unique and authentically female works, we decided to make an image to mourn not only the tragic life of Anne Hutchinson, but also the terrible waste of women's talent that characterized the seventeenth century. The plate, which depicts a shawl-like form that also resembles a shroud, sits beneath a drooping willow tree on the runner. The image grips the edge of the plate, a metaphor for Hutchinson's efforts to escape from an environment that 'contained' women and expected them to suffer and be still.

Hutchinson arrived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony with her husband and family in 1634. The mother of sixteen children, most of whom survived, she soon became widely known for her knowledge of midwifery and herbal healing. She had been raised in England and educated at home, where she learned about theology and theological arguments from her father (a minister) and in the Colony she remained vitally interested in the religious issues of the day. As a follower of John Calvin, she began gathering women in her home to discuss his sermons, since women were not allowed to attend the regular after-sermon debates. Between fifty and a hundred women met weekly, sometimes traveling great distances to hear Anne's commentary and to voice their own thoughts.

Hutchinson's teachings contradicted those of the Church, which required as blind a submission to its doctrine as was then demanded of a wife by her husband. Anne believed that the Holy Spirit dwelt in everyone, and not—as Calvin and other ministers insisted—only in those who had been selected for grace. Encouraged to believe in their own inner powers, her followers grew bold, arguing with clergymen during sermons and even walking out of services when ordered to be silent and remember woman's place.

Frightened by Hutchinson's power, the clergy tried to convince her to modify her views. Because she had so much community support, they felt they had to move slowly, but she was finally brought to trial for heresy. During the two-day trial, Anne was accused of stepping out of her place—of being a 'husband rather than a wife, a preacher rather than a hearer, and a magistrate rather than a subject.'

Although no charges were proven against her, Hutchinson was excommunicated by the Church and banished by the Colony. She and her family moved to Rhode Island, but the church elders followed her and forced her to leave again. After her husband died Anne settled near New York, but it was not long before she, six members of her family, and two others of her household met a brutal death at the hands of hostile Indians.

SACAJAWEA (1787-1812)

As the fur trade developed in North America, traders took Native American women as mistresses almost as a matter of course, with or without their consent. Yet because these traders were dependent upon the good will of the Indians in order to move safely through their territory, they were generally far less cruel than the soldiers. By the time the first settlers arrived, attitudes had changed. The new arrivals were determined to be rid of the Native Americans, even if that meant exterminating them. Indians were despised, and native women were regularly hunted like animals and clubbed to death or shot with rifles.

Previously, most Native American women had enjoyed high status in their societies, but there were some tribes in which women were less well treated. Sacajawea was born a Shoshone and captured as a child by the Minnataree; neither of these tribes held women in high esteem. While still a child, Sacajawea was acquired as wife and servant by a fur trader, either by barter or in a gambling game. The trader was later hired by Lewis and Clark as an interpreter for their expedition, which had been organized to explore some of the land gained through the Louisiana Purchase and to find a route to the Pacific Ocean. Sacajawea ultimately became both the interpreter and the guide, although it was her trader husband who had been formally hired. She was only sixteen when the trip began, her baby just six weeks old.

As the only woman on the Lewis and Clark expedition, it fell to Sacajawea to forage and prepare the food, gather herbs and make healing potions, nurse the sick, and mend clothes as well as care for her infant son. Her daily assistance was accepted by the explorers without comment, though her very presence protected them by assuring the Indians they encountered that their mission was peaceful (a war party never traveled with a woman who carried a baby in her arms.) Also, while in Shoshone country, she secured the necessary horses and equipment that ensured the expedition's success. When they returned from their long journey, however, she received no pay and her name was almost lost to history, despite her importance to Lewis and Clark. Sadly, Sacajawea had no way of knowing that her help in opening up the Northwest Territory would eventually lead to the wholesale slaughter of Native American tribes.

Sacajawea's plate stands as a symbol of the efforts she made to bring about peace between Indians and whites, but it also commemorates her tragic error in aiding the conquerors of her people. Carved in low relief and utilizing the straight lines Shoshone women preferred, the iconography of the plate is derived from the parafleche, or rawhide paintings, traditionally done by Sacajawea's tribe. Matte and gloss paints are combined on the surface of the plate by applying two firings of vellum to the glazed procelain before using the matte color. Attached to the plate is a beaded papoose carrier like that in which Sacajawea might have carried her child, and this elaborate beading, which employs traditional techniques and motifs, is repeated on the back of the runner, on the borders, and in and around her name.

CAROLINE HERSCHEL (1750-1848)

Caroline Herschel, an astronomer and one of the leading women in science in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, composed her own epitaph. Engraved on her tombstone, it reads: 'The eyes of her who is glorified here below turned to the starry heavens. Her own discoveries of comets and her participation in the immortal labors of her brother bear witness of this to future eyes.'

Herschel's plate and runner pay tribute to a woman who never received the recognition she deserved. Wings lift from the surface of the plate in a gesture that represents the efforts she made to become an independent woman. In the center of the form, there is an eye that looks out upon the embroidered universe which covers Herschel's runner and provides her with an image of the skies at which she gazed. The crewel-work, translated by Marjorie Biggs from my painting, repeats both the color and the pen-work hatching on the plate.

Born in Hanover, Germany, Caroline was tutored in secret by her father. (Mrs. Herschel was opposed to her daughter's being educated, perhaps fearing that erudition would only make her restless with a woman's lot.) As the child grew older she became obsessed with the idea of earning her own living. Gifted in music, she became a solo performer, but, just as she had begun to achieve some measure of success, she was forced to give up her career and go to England. Her brother William, a musician and astronomer, needed an accompanist, someone to help him with his scientific work, and a housekeeper as well.

William's involvement in astronomy soon became his sole preoccupation and he expected his sister to give up her music and spend all her time assisting him. At night she took notes on her brother's observations, and during the morning she recopied the notes, made calculations, and systematized the work. Each day she planned the evening's labor and, in order to accomplish all that was expected of her, taught herself mathematics by sheer force of will. Her borther had too little patience to teach her, and therefore she gathered information when and as she could. She also helped in the tedious work of constructing William's telescopes, making models and grinding and polishing the reflectors.

In addition to all this, she ran William's household, even after he was married. While her brother and his family vacationed during the summers, Herschel did her own astronomical work. She was the first woman to discover a comet, finding eight in all. In 1798 the Royal Astronomical Society published two catalogs of stars she had compiled, and in 1825 she completed her own (and her brother's) work by presenting a star catalog of 2,500 nebulae and clusters to the Royal Society. The Society made her an 'honorary' member, for, of course, women were not admitted to regular membership. The highlight of her life, however, was receiving a small salary from the king; despite the fact that this was only one-fourth the money paid to her brother, she had achieved her modest goal of earning her own keep.

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT (1759-1797)

Mary Wollstonecraft, a novelist, pivotal feminist writer, and theoretician, was born in England in 1759. She became acutely aware of the position of women through watching her father constantly bully her submissive mother. As soon as possible Mary left home and opened a girls's school, which she hoped would give her a chance for independence. The school was prestigious during its brief life, but its main importance to Wollstonecraft's development was the exposure it offered her to the radical ideas of the period.

In 1786, after the publication of her book 'Thoughts on the Education of Daughters,' Wollstonecraft obtained a job as a magazine reviewer in London and soon became a serious student of the political and social issues of the day. The French Revolution was creating turmoil in the intellectual community with which Mary had become involved. Like many women of her era, she looked to the events in France to bring about the emancipation of women. But she was soon disillusioned and, in a rage, wrote 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,' which made her famous overnight.

In this book, Wollstonecraft argued that (1) if women failed to become men's equals, the progress of human knowledge and virtue would be halted, and (2) if women were to contribute to the development of the human race, their education would have to prepare them to do so. In order for this to occur, both sexes had to be identically educated. Moreover, Mary insisted that the tyranny of men had to be broken both politically and socially if women were to become free to determine their own destinies. Though Wollstonecraft did not live to see the effect of her arguments, she said on her death-bed, 'I have thrown down the gauntlet. It is time to restore women to their lost dignity and to make them part of the human species.'

It would be a long time before this vision could be actualized. In the meantime, many women buried their frustrations in the needlework with which they filled their days; they covered their pillow-cases with fine stitiching, did needlepoint on all their chairs, crocheted doilies for their bureaus, and made lace for the collars and cuffs of their clothes. In England a craze developed for a technique called stump work, which involved stuffing tiny figures, dressing them, and applying them to boxes and lids. Stump work covers Wollstonecraft's runner as a symbol of the 'silken fetters' which, she proclaimed, held women in chains. The image on her plate is in stark contrast to its trivializing context and struggles to transcend its confines by sheer power and force. The back of the runner depicts Mary's death in childbirth, a gruesome textimony to the loss of female genius and the tragic waste of women's lives.

SOJOURNER TRUTH (I797-I883)

'Look at me!' demanded Sojourner Truth, an abolitionist and feminist. The audience at the Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, gasped at the sight of this tall, imposing black woman. 'Look at my arm,' she continued; 'it's plowed and planted and gathered into barns and no man could head me—and ain't I a woman?' She seemed unaffected by the sneers and hisses of some of the men in the audience; as difficult as it must have been to confront a prejudiced and resistant white crowd, it was not unbearable, as slavery had been.

Sojourner's challenge was directed to one of the clergymen who had warned that, if women continued their efforts to obtain 'rights,; they would lose the consideration and deference with which men treated them. But this former slave knew all too well that the privileges enjoyed by white women were built in part on the exploitation of Blacks and that the 'deference' to which this minister referred was not offered to black women.

Sojourner had discarded her slave name (Isabell Hardenburgh) when she finally gained her liberty, choosing 'Sojourner' because sojourn meant 'to dwell temporarily,' which she thought an apt description of one's tenure in this life, and 'Truth' as the message that she intended to carry to the world. Traveling around the country on foot, she told her life story as as way of exposing the evils of slavery. She spoke of her brothers and sisters being sold off and she herself sold several times, of being mis-treated and raped by her master and deceived with promises of freedom.

On these journeys Sojourner discovered, like many women of her time, that the liberation of Blacks and that of women were actually intertwined. Her anti-slavery lectures soon became infused with arguments for women's rights. In I850 she publisned her autobiography and, with the proceeds from the book, supported herself. During the Civil War she visited Union troops and then, after the war was over, spent her time finding jobs and helping the newly freed slaves. She was an inspiration to all who heard her and a proud symbol of black women's struggle to transcend the opporession of both their sex and their race.

Sojourner's image was carved out of a solid two-inch plate jiggered on a specially made mold. Three faces, emanating from a single body form, were inspired by African art. The sad face on the left is painted naturalistically and weeps for the suffering of the slaves. The highly stylized face on the right reflects the rage experienced by black women but expressed only at the risk of harsh punishment—sometimes death. The center face, a highly decorated mask, symbolizes the concealment of the real self required not only of black women, but of their white sisters as well. The upraised arm and clenched fist which complete Sojourner's portrait repeat the angry gesture she made in that Ohio church.

The Sojourner Truth plate sits on a runner made of a pieced quilt combining strip-woven African patterns with triangular sections of printed fabric. This design honors southern slave women, who, in an effort to retain some vestiges of their proud heritage, pieced scraps of weaving from their homelands into large, beautiful quilts.

SUSAN B. ANTHONY (1820-1906)

Susan B. Anthony's form lifts up from the surface of the plate with great force in a vain effort to escape its confines. Raw and angry, her image was carefully modeled and built from one of my drawings by Daphne Ahlenius, an English-trained ceramicist from northern California who brought thirty years' experience in clay to the problems we confronted in creating the fully dimensional plates. To bring my drawings to life required the combined skills of a whole team of female ceramicists (Leonard Skuro had left the Project)—headed by Judye Keyes—who assembled in my studio for an intensive period during which we did nothing but work, run, sleep, and eat. By this time we had evolved a process of defining the image and then solving the technical problems. Working on the prototypes for the last plates on the table required that everyone involved identify with the yearning of these women of recent history to liberate themselves and their sex. Perhaps that was why only women were on the team by then, for there was an unspoken understanding among us of what I intended these last images to mean.

Anthony's life has become a legend that inspires us all. To me she is the queen of the table, who stood firmly for fifty years. She changed the face of the nation and—with her colleague, Elizabeth Cady Stanton—led the revolution which began in 1848. Addressing themselves to eighteen grievances, the women who gathered in Seneca Falls demanded the right to vote, to be educated, to enter any occupation, to have control over their own bodies, to sign legal papers, to manage their own earnings, and to administer their own property.

At first the outcry was enormous, and women were ordered back to their 'place.' But by the 1860's Anthony and her co-workers had produced some measure of reform. Then, though she and Stanton argued against it, most of the women involved themselves in the Civil War. Afterwards their sacrifice, which many women thought would earn them the vote, was instead rewarded by the word 'man' being entered into the Constitution for the first time. Their work of Seneca Falls had to begin all over again; this time the focus was on suffrage, although no one imagined that it would take over half a century to achieve.

In 1893 Anthony attended the Columbian Exposition, where—partly through her efforts—a Woman's Building had been created. A World Council of Women was held there, and, when Susan B. Anthony appeared at the opening, tens of thousands stood and cheered. An international feminist movement had been built in 50 years, and all around the world women were agitating for their rights. It seemed that no force could stop them and that equality was in sight. But when Anthony was on her deathbed, before the vote was won, she grasped the hand of one of her co-workers as if to communicate to her that the job had only begun. For she and Stanton had always known that only through a fundamental transformation of the world could women's position really be changed.

ELIZABETH BLACKWELL (1891-1910)

Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman in America to graduate from a medical school and become a licensed physician, struggled throughout her lifetime to open the medical profession to women. Deciding early that she would challenge the restrictions which barred women from becoming doctors, she began to both study medicine on her own and save money to attend school. She applied to twenty-nine institutions and was rejected by all but one—where a doctor agreed to let her sit in on his classes provided that she wear male attire. Although she knew there were some women who had done this, Blackwell refused; it was as a woman that she wanted to be accepted.

Finally, Blackwell was admitted to Geneva College, a small school in New York. The dean had asked the male students to decide her fate, and —more as a joke than anything else—they had agreed to let her attend. When Blackwell arrived, however, not only did the students treat her badly, but she was avoided by all the 'proper' women of the town. Nonetheless, she graduated with honors in 1849 and went to Paris and London to complete her training.

Blackwell decided to set up her practice in New York City, but the hostility which greeted her made a shambles of her plans. She was denied work at hospitals, was unable to rent office space, went months without any patients, and wrote, in 1851, 'I stand alone.' She then began to lecture on sex, birth, and health to women. As s result, people followed her down the streets shouting insults and sent her vile anonymous letters.

Eventually, Blackwell established a practice with her sister, Emily, and Marie Zakrzewska, both of whom had—with her help—become doctors. Together they opened the New York Infirmary for Women and Children, the first hospital where female doctors could get training and clinical experience as well. In 1865, Elizabeth Blackwell founded a medical school for women, after which she went to England to help open the profession there.

Blackwell's plate twists and squirms around the 'black well' that is in the center. Painted in spectral colors and oversprayed with china-paint, the plate was made by casting a dome, trimming it on the potter's wheel, and then applying it to a jiggered plate. The design team decided that the plate needed to be pierced, and the hole in the center was introduced by Judye Keyes. The latter also worked with me and the design team on the runner, which extends the forms of Blackwell's portrait and is made from reverse applique. The brightly colored fabrics shrouded with gray chiffon give the runner a dreary appearance. For me, this reflects the quality of this pioneer doctor's life and emphasizes the difficulties she faced.

'I understnd now,' she once said, 'why this life has never been lived before. It is hard, with no support but a high purpose, to live against every species of social opposition.'

EMILY DICKINSON (1830-1886)

Born in Massachusetts, Emily Dickinson lived an outwardly uneventful life. She remained in her father's house, living as a spinster daughter, and spent most of her time in her room. Her father treated her as a child even after she was grown; she had to beg him for postage stamps and plead for money to buy books. But at least she was able to maintain her personal freedom and had time to read, think, and write.

Dickinson felt that her own poetry was dangerous, for it revealed feelings that society had taught women to repress. 'I took my power in my hand, and went out against the world,' she wrote, knowing that her intense creativity was hopelessly at odds with the prevailing ideas of what a woman was supposed to be. She produced 1,775 poems, which she bound into booklets with a darning needle and carefully placed in trunks to be found, read, and published after her death. Her subject matter was varied and her poetry filled with passion and rage. 'A letter to the world,' she called it, but it is only recently that her personal language has begun to be understood.

Whenever I thought about the Victorian lady that a woman like Dickinson was expected to be, I envisioned lace: lace collars and cuffs on her dresses, lace doilies on all the chairs, lace cloths on the tables, and lace edgings on the demure nightgowns she would wear. Imagining a female creative genius imprisoned in all that lace evolved into my concept of Dickinson's runner and plate. We jiggered a plate with a thick center, which I then carved. Its strength is in stark contrast to the surrounding layers of immobile lace, achieved through a process called lace-draping which was originally used in the production of Dresden dolls. Judye Keyes solved the technical problems of draping the lace in porcelain slip. Each piece of lace had to be basted, then carefully shaped around the center form. Painted by Rosemarie Radmaker, a traditional china-painter from Oregon, the soft but fleshy colors suggest a sensuality that nineteenth century women were not supposed to have.

Shortly after the plate was completed, a woman gave us a beautiful lace collar that we placed directly beneath it. The runner, made under the supervision of Connie von Briesen, has extraordinary ribbon embroidery utilizing the kind of antique ribbons with which von Briesen's mother worked years ago. Lace borders over netting with ruffles on the back provide an incongruous setting for a poet whose voice was as powerful as her will. The lace also embodies the tragedy of women's past: Endless hours were required to make these beautiful but unappreciated patterns by women who remain unknown.

ETHEL SMYTH (1858-1944)

Ethel Smyth, a gifted young composer raised in an upper-class English family, arrived in Liepzig in 1877 and quickly became involved in its lively musical world. By the time she was twelve she knew that her life would be dedicated to music, and by 1889 her compositions were being performed in Germany and received glowing reviews. Upon her return to England, however, she discovered that few conductors would perform her compositions.

Smyth struggled desperately to establish herself, but even when she was able to arrange a concert, something would inevitably go wrong. The orchestra would be inadequately prepared or the conductor unable to attend. If she was invited to participate in a program, male composers would complain. If her work was included anyway, there would rarely be any critical response in the musical journals. Or if she was mentioned by a critic, he would accuse her of plagiarizing a male composer's work.
The little positive critical response she received brought no new offers, none of the opportunities that male composers enjoyed.

While Smyth's early work consisted of orchestral and chamber music, she later became interested in operas and large choral works. She wanted to compose in a scale previously reserved for men and wrote her 'Mass in D,' one of the most ambitious pieces ever undertaken by a female composer. It's production was made possible only because of the support of two influential women; the audience was wildly enthusiastic, but the work was attacked by critics and eclipsed for thirty years. Smyth recorded her struggles as a composer in a series of books. At first her writing brought attention to her music, but it ultimately failed to alter the neglect she endured.

Angry and frustrated at the obstacles she encountered, Smyth became involved in the struggle for women's rights. During the two years she devoted to suffrage work, she wrote 'The March of Women'—sung by suffragists during demonstrations, in prison, and whenever their spirits faltered. Once, while visiting the wife of an influential politician in order to gain her husband's support, Smyth played some of her music, including her march. After hearing it, the woman said, 'How can you, with your gift, touch a thing like politics with a pair of tongs?' "I do it just because of my music,' Smytn replied, 'for owing to the circumstances of my career as a woman composer, I know more than most people about the dire workings of prejudice."

Smyth's plate is in the shape of a piano whose lid threatens to totally compress the form. On the music stand are notations for one of her operas, 'The Boatswain's Mate,' a comic work with a feminist point of view. The plate rests on a runner made from tweed fabric cut and sewn to suggest a tailored suit—the outfit Smyth preferred. Taken in to fit the confines of the runner's dimensions, it is a metaphor for the containment of Smyth's great dream.

MARGARET SANGER (1879-1966)

Margaret Sanger's life is a testament to her commitment to the idea that women should 'look the world in the face with a go-to-hell look in the eyes; have an idea; speak and act in definace of convention.' From the time she opened her first birth control clinic in 1918, Sanger was repeatedly arrested as she battled to break through the curtain of silence that surrounded all matters of sex and reproduction.

'Who cares whether a woman keeps her Christian name. . .?' Sanger demanded as she lectured around the country. 'Who cares whether she wears her wedding ring? Who cares about her right to work? Hundreds of thousands of laundresses, clockmakers, scrub women, servants, telephone girls, shop workers would gladly change places with the feminists in return for the right to have leisure, to be lazy a little now and then. For without the right to control their own bodies all other rights are meaningless.'

When Sanger first began studying nursing, she was confronted with countless pleas by women for some sort of birth control. Determined to find an answer, she renounced nursing and went to Europe and the Orient to investigate contraceptive research being done there. Upon her return to America, Sanger forced the issue of birth control into the public forum through her magazine 'The Woman Rebel,' simply ignoring the laws of the time that prohibited the dissemination of any information on contraception. Convinced that the birth-control movement had to be worldwide, she convened the International Birth Control Congress in 1925. The organization formed there was the forerunner of Planned Parenthood, of which Sanger became president in 1953.

A visionary and a feminist theoretician, Sanger believed that once women were freed of involuntary childbearing, they would change the world. 'War, famine, poverty, and oppression,' she worte, 'will continue while woman makes life cheap. When motherhood is a high privilege. . . it will encircle all.'

Although Sanger's conception of a new order forged by women has not yet been realized, she made a major contribution to the expansion of their choices. Her plate—painted in brilliant reds—proclaims women's bodies as their own. Cast in sections, then attached with slip and carved, the image reaches around the edges of the plate and tries to lift itself off, as a symbol of Sanger's efforts to lift up her sex and thereby the world. The plate sits on a runner, embroidered in pinks and reds by Terry Blecher and L.A. Olson, which extends the gesture on the plate and transforms the female reproductive system into an image of beauty and power.

NATALIE BARNEY (1876-1972)

Natalie Barney's richly beaded runner celebrates the life of this 'Amazon,' as she was frequently called. Shaped like a butterfly, it departs from the geometric format fo previous runners and begins to assume a singular identity. Barney, a writer, aphorist, and lesbian feminist, was—like her runner—independent and wildly extravagant. She once prepared her bed for a night of love by covering it entirely with lilies.

The lily, traditionally associated with the feminine, was Barney's trademark as well as a common motif in art nouveau, which her plate and runner incorporate. The plate is dark and edged with gold and was made by first carving the flower form and then making a plaster cast into which the clay was press-molded. After the cast shape ahd been applied to the plate, it was carved again and sanded. The surface was achieved by firing multiple layers of different colored lusters, over which gold pen work was applied. This image, which we thought would be easily accomplished, cracked at every stage—perhaps, like Barney herself, refusing to be confined.

Barney came from a wealthy Ohio family, but she instinctively rebelled against the social expectations of her class. From the time she was young, she was aware of her homosexuality and the implications of being a woman. When she was seven she was taken on a European tour, and in Belgium she saw a cart pulled by a woman and a dog, both in harness; the woman's husband walked beside them, complacently smoking his pipe, which outraged Barney. She never forgot this sight, and when she was older she often told the story of the poor woman saddled like a horse.

By the time she was twenty, Barney had made a conscious decision to live as she pleased. She reveled in her lesbianism and wore it as a badge of pride, an unusual and courageous attitude at a time when strictures against homosecuality ranged from religious prohibitions to legal restraints.

Barney settled in Paris in 1899. Shortly after her arrival, she became involved with the lesbian feminist poet Renee Vivien. The two women were drawn together by their shared vision of a society where women were free and lesbianism was revered. In an unsuccessful effort to resurrect the Sapphic tradition, they went to Greece to found a poetic colony for women, but their affair ended somewhat unpleasantly. Barney had numerous relationships, the longest of which was her fifty-year friendship with the painter Romaine Brooks.

Every Friday night for almost sixty years, women gathered at Barney's salon at 20 rue Jacob to see each other, to hear concerts, and to read poems and essays exploring their own attitudes and sexuality. Barney's commitment to living as she chose and providing support for other women is clearly reflected in her suggested epitaph: 'She was the friend of men and the lover of women, which, for people full of ardor and drive, is better than the other way around.'

VIRGINIA WOOLF (1882-1941)

Virginia Woolf was born in England and—because she was 'delicate'—educated primarily at home by her father. She was intimidated by his tyrannical ways and later commented that had he not died when he did, she would have written no books. While still young, she was raped by her half-brother, which permanently affected her sexuality and contributed to the first of the mental breakdowns that tormented her throughout her life.

In 1904 Woolf moved to Bloomsbury, the center of London's bohemian intellectual world. She had decided to become a writer, and her work developed against the background of the violent English suffrage fight. The mere thought of being discriminated against made Woolf physically ill; she often left parties when an anti-female remark was made. Generally she shied away from social protest, however, and addressed herself to the deeper issues of women's plight. In 1912 she married Leonard Woolf, despite her preoccupying concern—manifested both personally and in her writing—with the question of whether a woman's intellectual and creative needs could be satisfied within the framework of married life.

When Virginia Woolf's first novel was published she had another breakdown, terrified that the book would be rejected. Her mental condition is usually ascribed to her childhood experiences and 'failure' at sex and motherhood, but there is another view which relates to her philosophy and her work: Woolf had studied the lives and writings of the women before her and knew that they had been consistently misunderstood; she feared that the female point of view put forth in her work would cause it to be belittled by critics, and whenever she completed a manuscript she was in danger of another breakdown because of this anxiety.

According to Woolf's philosophy, the subjugation of women was the key to most of the social and psychological disorders of Western Civilization. She believed that only by wedding masculine and feminine traits on personal, social, and esthetic levels could the world be sane. But her struggle to build an integrated language and to affect the world seemed hopeless in the face of fascism, which she saw as the values of patriarchy gone mad. She believed that the rise of Nazism was an infantile reaction to women's demands for equal rights. Unable to maintain her sanity in 1941 she deliberately submerged herself in a river and drowned.

Although women have been writing about their experiences for centuries, they have not had their own language; this is the problem Woolf addressed. Her work, like the beacon emanating from the lighthouse in her most famous book, illuminated the path to a woman-formed language in literature.

Woolf's image breaks away from the basic plate shape and—though still contained within its place setting—is the most liberated form on the table. The 'breaking open' of the plate's structure symbolizes the breaking of the historic silence about women's lives, which can only be fully understood if women possess their own forms of expression. The luminous petals spread open to reveal the bursting center, an image of Woolf's fecund genius.

GEORGIA O'KEEFFE (b.1887)

Originally from Wisconsin and later Virginia, Georgia O'Keeffe studied at the Chicago Art Institute and the Art Students League in New York. For the next few years she worked at commercial art until, frustrated because her painting seemed to be at a standstill, she returned to her family's home with the idea of giving up her art career.

She eventually took a teaching position in Texas, however, and there—among the 'terrible winds and wonderful emptiness' and far from the debates on women's rights—she began to find a personal visual language that could express her perception of the world.

One day O'Keeffe assembled all the painting she had done and, seeing that her work was mostly derived from other artists, destroyed it. She then did a new series of drawings and sent them to a friend in New York. Although O'Keeffe had asked that she show the work to no one, her friend took it to the small but famous gallery called '291.' Alfred Stieglitz, the photographer and owner of the gallery, looked at the drawings intently and said, 'Finally a woman on paper,' commenting on the fact that the work was not only by a woman artist but by one who 'gives something of a woman feeling; and a woman isn't a man.'

Stieglitz decided that O'Keeffe's work should be given a chance and exhibited. In addition, he offered to do for her what he had done numerous times for men of talent—support her financially while she painted. This brought her to New York and made her part of the art scene that centered around Stieglitz and his gallery. His support allowed her to work freely for the first time; he also gave her work exposure, as he exhibited it regularly for over twenty years. In 1924 O'Keeffe and Stieglitz were married, but O'Keeffe kept her own name. 'Why should I take on someone else's famous name?' she asked.

When Stieglitz died O'Keeffe moved permanently to New Mexico, where she had gone for some part of every year since 1929—drawn by the landscape, which she painted again and again. Her life became increasingly centered on painting, and she refused to allow anything to distract her from the well-ordered pattern of her existence. In the late 1960's people developed great interest in her work, although her style had not really changed. 'It is just that what I do seems to move people today in a way that I don't understand at all.'

I—like many other women artists—see O'Keeffe as 'the mother of us all.' Her work provides a foundation upon which we can build a universal language to express our own point of view as women. Her plate is derived from one of her paintings and is a sculptural translation in which her forms merge with mine. Built on a dome whose center is punctured to become a mysterious, internal space, O'Keeffe's image rises higher than any other on the table. Though it tries to force itself further upward, it is prevented from doing so by its firm connection to the plate. Thus, despite their heroic efforts, all the women represented are still contained within their place setting at 'The Dinner Party.'

HANDOUT #8

BACKGROUND BOOKS FOR WOMEN'S HISTORY

ANCIENT MIRRORS OF WOMANHOOD: A TREASURY OF GODDESS AND HEROINE LORE FROM AROUND THE WORLD, Merlin Stone. Beacon, 1979. Collection of pre-patriarchal mythology from several continents.

THE CHALICE AND THE BLADE: OUR HISTORY, OUR FUTURE, Riane Eisler. Harper & Row, 1988. It synthesizes archeological findings on pre-patriarchal societies when women were decision-makers and the world was peaceful. Eisler sees the hope of continued existence on this planet dependent on our rediscovering how to do "partnership societies" rather than "dominator" ones.
Ashey Montagu calls this "the most important book since Darwin's 'Origin of the Species.'

THE CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY OF WOMEN, edited by Margot Duley and Mary Edwards. Feminist Press, 1986. Readings and excellent bibliographies on women in India, China, Islam, Africa, and Latin America.

THE DESCENT OF WOMAN, Elaine Morgan. Stein & Day, 1972. Outlines the origins of woman as the origins of the race, blowing Desmond Morris and Richard Ardery out of the water, so to speak. An important book. Out of print.*

THE DINNER PARTY, A SYMBOL OF OUR HERITAGE, Judy Chicago, Anchor Press, Doubleday, 1979. Describes the process of creating a great work of art, but also has biographies of over a thousand memorable women down through history. Out of print.*

A FEMINIST DICTIONARY, Cheris Kramarae and Paula A. Treichler. Pandora Press, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985. Definitions from a feminist point of view, often with quotations of famous people.

THE FIRST SEX, Elizabeth Gould Davis, Penguin Books, Putnam's Sons, 1971. Women's contributions down across the centuries. Many women consider this the most significant book they ever read. Out of print.*

THE GREAT COSMIC MOTHER: REDISCOVERING THE RELIGION OF THE EARTH, Monica Sjoo & Barbara Mor. Harper & Row, 1987. A history of pagan (people) religions, which was a history of honoring the Earth, our Mother. It helps the reader see the patriarchal religions in historical context.

GYN/ECOLOGY: THE METAETHICS OF RADICAL FEMINISM, Mary Daly. Beacon Press, 1978. Read the chapters on witchburning, footbinding, suttee, and African genital mutilation first. They make it easier to understand the introduction and "sparking, spinning, and speaking" chapters. An outrageous, angry, awesome book.

NOT IN GOD'S IMAGE: WOMEN IN HISTORY FROM THE GREEKS TO THE VICTORIANS, edited by Julia O'Faolain and Lauro Martines. Colophon, Harper, 1973. Excerpts from male historical figures who helped strip women of their freedom from Homer to 19th century English judges. Out of print.*

THE QUOTABLE WOMAN, Elaine Partnow, Doubleday Anchor, 1978.

REVELATIONS: DIARIES OF WOMEN, edited by Mary Jane Moffat and Charlotte Painter. Vintage, Random Rouse, 1975. Women have always been great diarist in societies that allowed them to write. This volume includes excerpts from American and European journals.

SISTERHOOD IS GLOBAL, edited by Robin Morgan. Anchor Press, Doubleday, 1984. This is a world almanac about women's status in many countries of the world. In addition to statistics, there is an essay written by women from each featured country.

WOMEN, CULTURE, & SOCIETY, edited by Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere. Stanford, 1974. Sixteen women anthropologists analyze the place of women in human societies.

WOMEN IN THE WORLD AREA STUDIES SERIES, Susan Hill Gross and Marjorie Wall Bingham, Mid-Western Women's History Center. Distributed by Glenhurst Publications, 6300 Walker Street, Louis Park, MN 55416.

WOMEN IN AFRICA OF THE SUB-SAHARA I: ANCIENT TIMES TO THE 20TH CENTURY
WOMEN IN AFRICA OF THE SUB-SAHARA II: THE 20TH CENTURY
WOMEN IN TRADITIONAL CHINA
WOMEN IN MODERN CHINA
WOMEN IN INDIA
WOMEN IN ISLAM
WOMEN IN ISRAEL
WOMEN IN JAPAN
WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA I: FROM PRE-COLUMBIAN TIMES TO THE 20TH CENTURY
WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA II: THE 20TH CENTURY
WOMEN IN THE USSR
WOMEN IN ANCIENT GREECE AND ROME
WOMEN IN MEDIEVAL/RENAISSANCE EUROPE

These area study booklets have sound filmstrips to accompany them. They present much good information difficult to find elsewhere but lack a feminist perspective. They work best if *SISTERHOOD IS GLOBAL* is used in conjunction with them and the question, "What important information did the area study not mention?"

WOMEN IN THE WORLD ATLAS, Joni Seager & Ann Olson. Touchstone, Simon & Schuster, 1986. Maps, charts, and graphs that depict the status of women around the world. Every world history class needs several of these in order to do classroom activities with them.

If you want to know more about women's music, put yourself on the mailing list for Ladyslipper catalog, PO Box 3130, Durham, NC 27715. The Ladyslipper collective is the largest women's music distributor in the world and their catalog is full of information about women performers and composers— folk, rock, blues, classical—all kinds.

**Women's books with significant messages that challenge the existing system tend to quickly go out of print. If you find a woman's book that you like, it is important to buy it quickly while it is still available. For out of print books, ask your local used bookstore (if you have one) to keep on the lookout for titles. Another source is Powell's Bookstores, 1005 W. Burnside, Portland, OR 97209.*

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